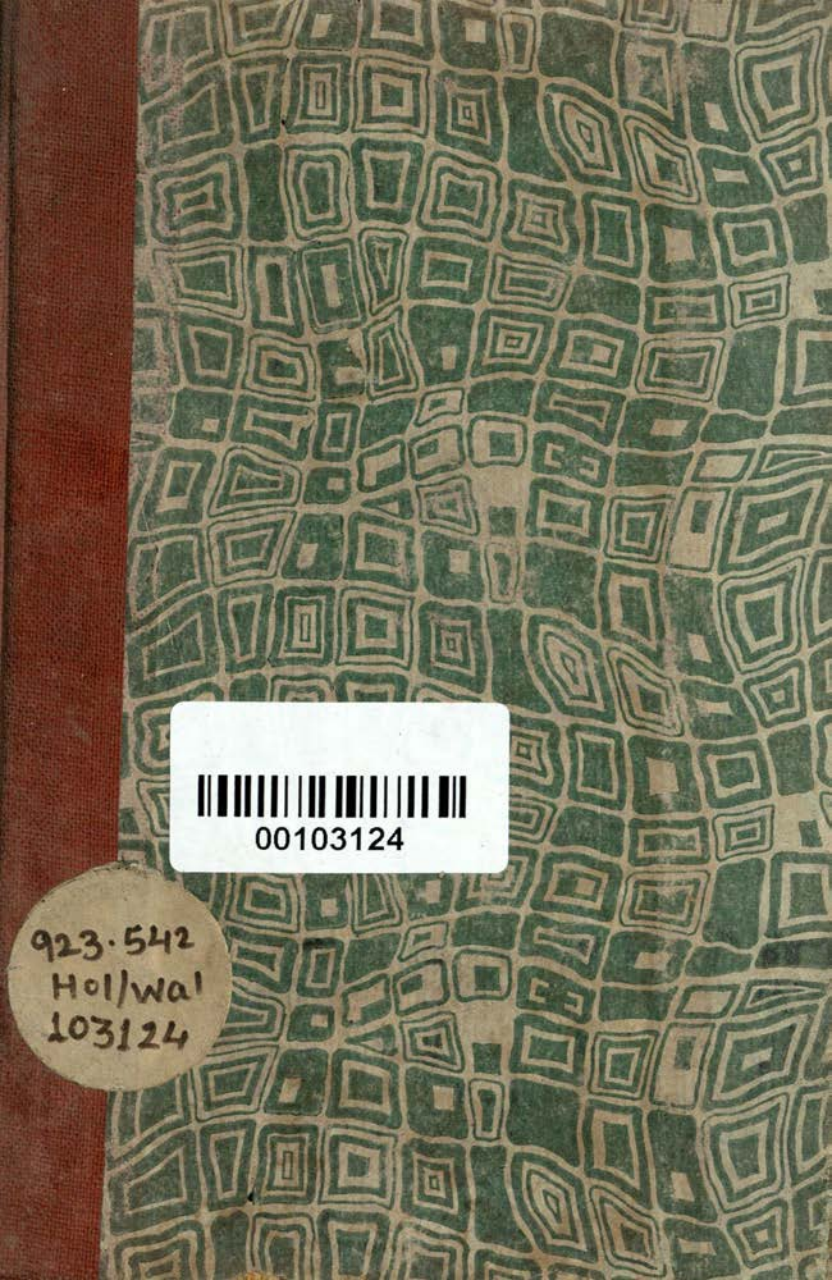
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BY

ROBERT HOLMES

A POLICE COURT MISSIONARY AND PROBATION OFFICER,
AND AN ASSOCIATE OF THE CENTRAL ASSOCIATION
FOR THE AID OF DISCHARGED CONVICTS

AUTHOR OF
'MY POLICE COURT FRIENDS WITH THE COLOURS'

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INTRODUCTION.

THE total number of men and lads wnom I have made any attempt at shepherding these seventeen years and more, either after discharge from a police court or after detention in a corrective institution or in prison, is seventeen thousand four hundred and thirty. Dividing these into four hundred and ninety-eight flocks of thirty-five apiece, every flock will contain just one black sheep. By a black sheep I mean one whom it seemed impossible to turn from the error of his ways, or else who, for all his fair promise, had gone back, or seemed bent upon going back, to evil courses.

In 'My Police Court Friends with the Colours' I have told sonfething of those who may be styled the pick of my flocks. I turn now to deal with my black sheep.

I do not mind confessing that when I wrote of the others I had no notion at all of writing of these in anything like the strain I am now led to adopt. I had not realised then to the extent that I have realised since how the war came to some of my saddest failures as an opportunity for regeneration to be grasped and made use of in a fashion which I now count it high privilege to describe.

Partly, I suppose, because members of my own family for generations have been found serving in Navy or Army, I grew up regarding the Services as non-existent for any who gave signs of being confirmed in evil habits. My reluctance to risk the comfort of men of character by the introduction of undesirables into Navy and Army caused me, until the 4th of October last year, to be able to state that I had never raised a finger to help into the Forces any man who had been convicted of felony. I had, and I have still, a deep veneration for our splendid Services.

Without help or encouragement from me, however, certain of my black sheep found entrance, especially after the great war began. Letters dribbled in first from one, then another. I learnt how proud they were, for the most part, to wear His Majesty's uniform in the days of training; how they conducted themselves on the field; how some bore cruel wounds; how others died. My prejudice against such men being encouraged to serve, which had survived even the needs of the war, began to break down. As recruits were more urgently wanted, and regulations barring Army entrance to men without character were removed, I began wondering whether the convictions I had hitherto acted upon were quite sound. The event transpired which is described in the opening chapter of this volume. If since then I have made no great effort to secure the enlistment of men of this class, I have at least placed no obstacle in the way.

Most who read their story will, I think, concede that the one-and-twenty black sheep I tell of here have done well. Exercising a shepherd's prerogative, I have given them such names as I fancied: sometimes aliases under which they at one time passed, sometimes formed by changing

the order of the letters of their real surnames. So far as men may, they have made full atonement for past misdeeds. In the weightier matter of a higher peace there are certain whose letters tell of calm faith in One Who has purchased that even for them.

Few save Tony, of all who are told of here, came under my influence till over twenty-three years old, and Tony, through another's fault, was not hopeful material to work upon. Should I have done better with them had I been able to handle them earlier? Coming when they did, could I have done more or more wisely for them? Were my methods right or wrong? What splendid fellows they would, most of them, have made had they gone the right way earlier! Was I to blame at all for their continuing to choose wrong, or did they come to me, these black sheep of mine, too old—character formed, and formed crooked—so that only the fierce heat of the furnace they passed through could make it weldable into straighter shape? Of those who return, how many will remain in the right path? Is the sad conclusion of Archie at all generally true? Is their moral fibre so warped that, after all this, it is still liable to spring back—that while extraordinary conditions have combed out their nature into fit and comely state they are "better away"?

I cannot, I must not, leave the matter without stating that I have selected for mention here only those who have done creditably in the war. There are those who have failed miserably. I will not weary others with their sombre story. There is no need to say more than that. For normal times I think it still a good rule to exclude men of bad or doubtful character from the Forces of the King.

But the service which the better sort have

rendered demands as reward that close study shall be given to the problem raised in the wasted periods of their lives. My judgment is that too much care cannot be given to the right formation of character in the young, and that every effort should be made to reclaim all offenders at the first wrong step, that it is easily possible to begin too late. Others will form their own conclusions.

ROBERT HOLMES.

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WALTER GREENWAY, SPY.

I.

GUNNER JOHN ERHAGAT.

UNTIL August 1915 I was ignorant of the existence of John Erhagat. Requested then to undertake his aftercare on the occasion of his discharge from a convict prison, I was given his "record," officially regarded as "bad." It showed that he drifted into a criminal career at twenty-two years old, and was almost perpetually in prison until twenty-seven. Pulling up for two years and a half, he kept sober and straight, and generally impressed decent folk with the idea that he had turned his back completely upon the past, only to grievously disappoint by taking once more to felony in 1913. The Court then held that penal servitude must be tried if haply a stern sentence would assist towards his reformation.

His home being at a mining village about ten miles distant from this city, I visited the married sister with whom he proposed lodging when released from prison.

My object was to discover whether it was likely that I could be of service in assisting Erhagat back to a straight path. In reply to inquiries, I gathered

certain information from the sister which was confirmed by the man's former employers and the local police.

His parents were respectable people of the mining class. Their home was clean and comfortable.

"John used to be as good a lad as you'd meet in a day's march," an elderly policeman, a big burly fellow, told me; "till he wor one-and-twenty, he never gave nobody a bit o' trouble. He lived with his sister after his mother died—his father got killed at the pit about a year before that—and he went on all right till he wor loose (became of age). Then he took to drink. His sister's husband wor a great Churchman, and had a lot to do with Band of Hope work. So he couldn't stand John's drinking ways. He wor very patient with him, though. He tried him as long as he could,—a sight longer than most folks would have done—and nobody can blame him for chucking him out at last.

"You see, John came home one afternoon blind drunk, and got a great family Bible off the parlour table, put it on the front door-step, on a chair, then fetched a table-cloth out of a drawer and put it on him—as he was, all in his pit-muck—for a surplice, and started reckoning to be a parson taking a service. His sister wor upstairs cleaning, and knew nought about all this performance till she heard somebody bawling out, pretending to sing. She opened the window and looked out, but he stood in the doorway—wi' his pulpit, like—and all she could see wor women running down the street to see what wor up, and laughing and carrying on. She didn't mix up much with them sort, so she banged the window down again and went on with her work, never dreaming as the performance wor taking place on her own door-step.

"As luck would have it, her husband came home while it wor on. When he saw the street about

full o' women and children, clapping their hands, and laughing fit to split at John's monkey tricks; before he made out fair what it wor all about, he wor mad enough; but when he heard John bellowing a lot of nonsense with a voice like a bull, and reckoning to be reading out of the Bible, *that* wor more than he could stand. So he told the crowd what he thought about 'em. *He's* a good strong voice, and all, and he used it; he's a plain talker, and he made 'em understand. That crowd melted to nothing in about three seconds.

"Then he went for John, who was dazed, like, at him turning up. He stripped his robe from off him in no time. He took him by the coat collar with one hand, and picked the Bible up with t'other, kicked the chair into the house, then banged the door to. *That* brought his wife downstairs; just as I went in to see if I wor wanted, like.

"'Whatever's up?' she says, as she sees me walk in, and her husband hold o' John's coat collar with one hand, and the Bible under t'other arm, and looking as mad as could be; 'and what's my mother's best table-cloth doing on the floor, all mucky?'

"'Ask your fool of a brother, if you don't know,' her husband said, in a way as showed he believed she knew more about it than she wanted to tell.

"Then, not knowing nought about John's carryings on having aught to do with the crowd she'd seen out of the chamber window, she lost her temper and said—

"'If he's as big a fool as you, he's about ready for the 'sylum. Let go on him, can't you. He's choking.'

"It wor a pity she turned stupid. That's the worst o' women. They must always put their spoon in before they know what they're talking about.

"She made her husband let go o' John, and before there was time to say Jack Robinson, John had landed him one fair on t' nose, and blood spurted out like a fountain, and there wor more mess on her mother's best table-cloth.

"I weighed in then, to quieten things. John wor going mad after coming round from the dazed sort of state his brother-in-law had surprised him into. There wor no telling who he'd be at next. So I knocked him on to the floor, and sat me down on him. I wor a bit stouter then than I am now —I'm no' but sixteen stone now; I wor eighteen then—and I kept him quiet. Then I said to the woman, Missus, I says; you can't have no idea what's been going on at outside o' your house. Your John, I had to follow him home, seeing as how he couldn't walk straight, and I didn't want him to get in no trouble. He got here right enough. But he wor no sooner in the house than he wor out again with the Bible, and a chair, and that there table-cloth on, reckoning it wor a surplice; and he had all the women of the neighbourhood round in two tick-tacks, and reckoned to be holding a service when your husband came up the street. You must have been rare and throng upstairs, else you'd have heard him. He bawled loud enough to wake the dead.

"I shall never forget the poor lass's face when she heard that. She wor allus a decent sort. It shamed her to think as her brother had shown himself up afore the neighbours. She held her head a bit above them, like.

"'Did you do *that*, John?' she says, all flushed up like a fighting-cock; 'did you make such a fool o' yourself wi' your drinking ways?'

"Poor John wor under me, and had no breath to talk with if he heard her. But she didn't wait very long for a answer.

"'You'd better find fresh lodgings,' she says;

'I'll keep you the week out, then you'll go;' and after that she set to work to help her husband to attend to his nose.

"When I'd sat on John long enough as I thought, I got up; and he got up after me. 'You'd better behave yourself,' I says to him; 'I don't live very far away, and if I hear o' any more o' your playing the goat, I'll lock you up, sure as you're born.'

"Then I left 'em to it. I can't tell you how they arranged things. In less than a week John wor lodging with a pit-mate two miles from here. His landlady wor young and good-looking, but hot stuff, and no mistake; and his landlord wor one o' them sort as can't speak a civil word when they're sober, nor a sensible one when they're drunk. John went to the pubs with the pair on 'em, and for about a couple o' months they all seemed as happy as pigs in muck. But nobody expected that to last long; and it didn't. One day John's landlord came to our station wanting a warrant. He said his wife had gone off with John, and taken all the furniture, while he wor working on nights at the pit.

"We told him he couldn't get a warrant to arrest his wife for running away, nor against John for running away with her. He ought to be glad to be rid of her, and not bother. As for his bits o' sticks, they wor hardly worth falling out about. If he'd a grudge against 'em he'd better leave 'em alone a bit. John would rue his bargain afore long, and leave her; then she'd come back home, and he could have a bit of talk to her. But nought would do but a warrant. So he went before a Bench and got one against the pair of 'em for stealing his goods. They took a bit of finding, but we got 'em at last.

"The fellow had a good lawyer, and he put all the blame on John, who stood it like a man.

The woman did nought but cry, and make it look as if she'd been led astray. She wor a bad little beggar, if ever there wor one. But she got off, and John got a month's hard labour. It ought to have been t'other way round.

"He wor no sooner out o' prison than she wor with him again. They had no money, so he stole to get some, and in a fortnight he wor back in jail. The same sort of thing went on for about five years. Then her husband got killed, and she drew about four hundred pounds compensation, and had a gay old time. She soon managed to pick up with a man about as bad as herself, and he married her. John didn't come back to these parts. I reckon as she didn't invite him. She seems to have settled down a bit now."

John's sister carried the story a stage further. She informed me that her brother got on very well after escaping from the fascination of the woman mentioned by the constable. He made his abode in another part of the country, worked hard, lived respectably, and gave every sign of reformation. He was so anxious to keep out of the way of temptation that he did not visit his old home during a period of two years and four months following his last discharge from prison. He regularly wrote encouraging letters, and his sister and her husband visited him altogether nine times, being on every occasion delighted with what they saw of him.

Then the letters abruptly ceased. They went to inquire the reason, and found that John had received a visit from "a little woman, about thirty, nice-looking, but very fast, like." She stayed in the place about a week, and John saw a good deal of her. Soon after she had gone away he gave up his situation, drew his small savings from the Penny Bank, pawned his superfluous clothing

(that is, all except what was on his back), and disappeared likewise.

The next tidings of him were somewhat unpleasant. He broke into his sister's cottage while the family slept, stripped the place of everything portable and worth taking, and departed, leaving a note on the table to state that he was "hard up and desperate," but that he would make good the loss he was causing. Possibly he would have done, but for the police of this city. Like the interfering busybodies they are, they broke up a little home which John had furnished here for the woman and himself, arresting the pair of them. The police alleged that the money for furnishing and housekeeping alike was obtained by burglarious means, and since they built up a very strong case against the couple, Susan went to prison for six months with hard labour, and John to penal servitude for three years.

I chanced to be taking a short holiday, and did not meet either of these interesting persons at any stage of the proceedings. Mentioning this fact to John's sister, she expressed regret:

"You ought to have seen that woman, sir," she said; "you wouldn't believe what she used to look like without you'd seen her as she was then; she'd have led any man astray, she would,"—which seemed to suggest that it was just as well I did not see her.

"Is she still living in this neighbourhood?" I inquired, thinking of John's return.

"Yes," was the reply; "but she's altered a lot now. I don't think he'll be in much danger from her any more. Her husband and her were having a row about twelve months since, and he threw a lamp at her, and her face got burnt badly. She looked fearful for a long while. She's improved now a good bit, but she'll never see her old looks again."

At that very moment a woman passed the door, tastefully attired in a blue serge skirt and a white silk blouse, her plentiful black hair admirably dressed to adorn a particularly handsome face. She tripped along very gracefully, and I found myself unconsciously admiring her appearance and deportment. To my amazement, John's sister whispered hoarsely—

"That's her: didn't you see how ugly it's made her."

I did not. There was a slight scar on her right cheek, but I was by no means sure that any trace of it would remain two months later, when John was due for release. Poor John! it was not worth while arranging for work for him in that place, and I could not recommend that he should accept his sister's offered hospitality for a single night.

If I did visit John's former employers, and learn that he was a decent workman until twenty-two years old, it was not with any idea of accepting their generous offer to give him another chance, but merely to be able to state to other prospective masters the character he bore for industry in his earlier years. I could see that it would never do to let him come back to within miles of that charmer's influence. Why will so many people persist in believing that wicked and immoral women attract only wicked and immoral men? And why do people talk as though a woman's infidelity to her husband prevents her from winning the lasting and passionate love of the man upon whom she bestows her illicit favours? For both these propositions are singularly untrue.

I returned from that visit determined, if I could, to bury John in the centre of this city, to get him work of a sort that would occupy every waking hour, Sunday and week-day alike, and to get him to promise never to go near his old home again; his sister, and her husband (who came in from

work before I left), having ultimately agreed that my proposals were sound.

On the 4th of October 1915 John was released from prison. He called on me the following morning, after reporting himself to the police. I knew him at once from the photograph which had been taken in prison and sent on to me, but he was better-looking than the picture led one to expect. Indeed, I was much struck by his whole appearance. About six feet in height, well built, clad in a good suit of blue serge, strong, serviceable boots, well polished; wearing a spotlessly clean collar and neat tie; ruddy-faced, regular-featured, with a thick crop of flaxen hair prematurely tinged with grey, he made a favourable impression upon me instantly by the pleasant frankness of his bearing.

After a few preliminary remarks, I asked him what he desired to do in the way of work, and was taken aback by his query—

"Is there any chance of my getting into the Army, sir?"

Those who have read 'My Police Court Friends with the Colours' will be aware that I have done something towards encouraging men and youths to enter various departments of National Service after recovering their feet and regaining character by applying themselves to honest industry for a period sufficiently long to provide a real test. Until that morning, however, I had not encouraged the enlistment of any man freshly discharged from prison. I knew not a few such who had joined the Army. But they had done so without any advice or help in that direction from myself. For I had a strong prejudice against men joining the Services except they had proved themselves worthy to associate with decent comrades.

"Well, I suppose you can join if you wish. Why do you enquire?" was my reply.

"I've been told," he went on, "that men aren't allowed to join if they've been in prison."

"That's hardly true," I said. "I know a good many who have gone into the Army immediately after discharge. But what makes you ask?"

"I ask," he said very earnestly, "because I want to join if I possibly can. All the way in the train yesterday"—he had come more than two hundred miles—"as people kept getting in and out, I felt that they were looking at me as if they wondered what I was doing not dressed in khaki. They seemed to scorn me, and I felt as they were right. And if that's going on, I don't know how I'm going to bear it. I'd give anything if I could join."

"I don't see anything to prevent you," I answered; "I would prefer that you settle down and prove that you can live honestly out of prison before you go, though. There are many ways in which you can serve your country, apart from fighting. Coal is wanted, and guns and shell, for example. You can lend a hand at getting coal, or I can easily get you a job in an armament works. So long as you are determined to do better, I don't see that you can well be in your wrong place wherever there is hard work to be done. You look fit and strong."

"I've done with my old life," he said in no boastful tone; "if I can't get into the Army, I'll work as hard as I can at anything you like to put me to. I've done that in prison. You'll have heard, perhaps, that almost all the chaps there have been doing their bit, best way they could, ever since the war began. I *do* want to be in at the fighting, though. It seems my one chance of making up for what I've done amiss. But I asked both the Governor and the Chaplain before I left if I could join, and they told me I couldn't. I must get that idea out of my head, they said; I

should find plenty of other ways of doing my bit, and I must work hard at one of them."

"What you have been told is quite true, no doubt," I explained: "neither the Governor nor the Chaplain could say anything else. If men went straight from the gate of a convict prison to the recruiting office, the fact would get abroad at once; it would seriously interfere with recruiting at home; while the Germans would revile our Army as made up of convicts. It was perfectly sound advice that was given you. They could not possibly tell you to enlist. But if you are determined to offer your services now that you are free, I am of opinion that you will be taken at any recruiting office you care to go to.

"At any rate, I know many ex-convicts who have been taken, as I have said already. It is true that most of them enlisted under false names, but if the police got to know, they didn't interfere. I suppose they thought it best to give the men a chance of making an entirely fresh start. The names of all ex-convicts will be known, and their regimental numbers, so that if they desert or play any tricks they will soon be laid by the heels. So long as they behave themselves, nothing will be said of their past."

"If I join at all it will be in my own name," he answered; "and I had rather they knew all about me before they say whether they'll have me or not. Then nothing can be reaped up against me. But do you think they'll have me when they know the whole truth?"

"I don't see why they shouldn't," I confessed;—I was getting interested in the fellow, and keenly anxious to help him to attain his heart's desire, so much had his manifest sincerity done to break down my prejudice;—"I know a man who had been discharged from the Navy for petty theft ten years ago, who went further wrong, and at

last got penal servitude like yourself. He came to me. I got work for him. But he never made a start at it. Instead of that he applied for enlistment in the Royal Naval Division, telling of his discharge from the Navy ten years before. The authorities kept him waiting for two days, then took him. I cannot say whether they knew what he had been guilty of in the meantime, or that he had served penal servitude. All I know is that he must have given his correct name for his offence of ten years before to be considered and forgiven, and that he is now a petty officer; so he has not met with interference from the police at any rate."

But the man was not satisfied. "If I can get them to take me, knowing all about me, fair and square, so that I can feel I can make a clean new start, with nothing to fear in the way of something coming out to spoil me just as I'm getting on, I'll be glad to go. But they must know. And if they won't have me, I'll do the best I can at any job you like to set me. I'm going to be a man for good and all now. While my country's in danger I'd rather drown myself than do anything amiss of any sort."

"Then why not go at once to the recruiting office here, and see if they'll accept you, having heard your complete story, and come back and tell me how you have fared," I suggested.

"I will, sir," he said, then paused, as a shade of doubt crossed his face. There was anxiety in his voice as he went on, perhaps remembering his recent interviews with prison Governor and Chaplain; "but I hope they won't take an awkward line at the recruiting office, and think any the worse of me for telling them."

"Look here," I said, trying to smooth things out a bit; "they ask no questions now about character, and they say nothing now, where they

used to inquire if a man had ever been in prison. Why do you think these alterations have been made? To make it possible for men like yourself to join, of course. If you gave your correct name, and said nothing of your past, you'd get through fast enough, and I don't think it a bit likely that any mortal will think worse of you for telling against yourself what you need not tell. Go and try, anyhow, and let me know."

He was going, when I had an inspiration. I would go with him, I said; and we went together.

The Captain in charge saw me in his office while the would-be recruit waited in an adjoining apartment. He was most sympathetic. "Yes," he said when my tale was told, "we'll take him if he can pass the doctor. You've faith in him: let's hope he'll turn out trumps. Perhaps this will make a man of him."

A minute later I earnestly desired to kick myself for lingering to express the gratitude I felt towards this excellent young officer; for as I opened the door to leave the apartment, the Major came in. I was introduced to him by the Captain, who reported my errand.

The Major was an elderly man, very proud of the Army. Evidently he did not take kindly to the idea of a criminal, no matter how earnest his professions of penitence, being allowed to enter its ranks. My own ideas having until an hour earlier closely corresponded with his, I could appreciate this attitude.

"Has he been in prison more than once?" he asked.

I was compelled to repeat the truth already told to the Captain. But its effect was as discouraging now as it had been encouraging before.

"We can't take him," the Major said quite decisively; "it wouldn't do at all to let such a man in."

"Thank you, sir," I said; "I'm quite satisfied. I entirely agree that care should be taken as far as possible to prevent men of undesirable character entering the Army. I've nothing at all to complain about. More than fourteen hundred men who have passed through my hands are serving in various branches of His Majesty's forces. But not one of these went on that honourable service until he had regained character.

"I should never have dreamt of bringing this man along if it were not for the fact that I am quite convinced he is determined to lead a new life. I may be wrong. I am pretty well acquainted with men of this class, and can usually read them, but I make mistakes now and then.

"Rightly or wrongly, I have made up my mind that I can venture to recommend this fellow to any employer of labour anywhere, and since you decline his services I shall do so. I quite understand that you are very properly reluctant to place him in a position to rob his comrades. I have the same difficulty in sending him into the coal mine or the armament works. The money and tools of his fellow-workmen will be at his mercy. But I think he will respect my confidence. I shall give him a start, convinced that the risk is very small. It is precisely because I feel this so strongly that I am here to give you the first refusal of his services, seeing that men are badly needed, that he is fit and strong, and that to be a soldier is the desire of his heart."

There seemed nothing for it but to leave the matter there, when the Major said, gruffly but kindly, "I suppose the devil has to live somehow."

It did not seem worth while risking the upsetting of that excellent officer's evident disposition to oblige after all by pointing out that I was not interested in the Devil, but in Erhagat;

so I resisted that temptation, and the Captain weighed in with—

"Yes, sir; and if Mr Holmes had not come along and explained the case, we should never have known the man's character. We ask no question now as to that, and the old inquiry about prison is no longer on the attestation form. If the man had come along alone, and given his name and nothing else, if physically fit he would have been accepted."

"Quite right," the Major agreed; "very well; we'll risk him. You'll tell him, Mr Holmes, that he's to mind his P's and Q's, and keep his own counsel. See him after he's been before the doctor, and talk to him. Tell him that if he goes wrong he's letting us all down. We've strained a point on his behalf on your recommendation, and because he's been manly enough to ask that all the truth should be told. Let him know that. Put him upon his honour not to give you away."

I thanked the gallant officer warmly, for he had done a splendidly generous thing in yielding to my request, his conception of the Army being that right and lofty ideal held by military men of the old school.

"He's got his chance," were the Major's parting words, "I hope he'll do well. He ought to, I'm sure, after all your goodness to him. Let us hope he will make as good a man as most of your protégés. Just let him understand that if he gives his mind to his work, and keeps himself straight, he'll get on. He's getting a clean start. He must forget all his life up to the present, and begin again. Then he'll make something out."

The Captain went with me to Erhagat, waiting in an adjoining room. The poor fellow's face was anxious. It turned deadly pale when he heard that he was to be given a chance.

"Thank you, sir," he said hoarsely, grasping my offered hand; "I shall never forget this."

There was something indescribably pathetic in his voice and manner. The Captain noticed it as I did.

"You'll be all right," he said encouragingly; "make up your mind to get on. You'll do as well as anybody else if you try."

I left the recruiting office in full agreement with an opinion expressed by the Captain that Erhagat would pass the doctor quite easily. In half an hour the man was back at my rooms, radiantly happy and very grateful. He assured me that I should never find occasion to regret the service rendered him, but he caused a little unworthy doubt to rise in my mind by informing me that he proposed running over to his sister's house for the night, having arranged at the recruiting office to join his battalion next day.

I remembered the danger lurking there. It must be risked, however. It was not worth while interfering.

Notwithstanding I was relieved when he turned up in the morning to renew his thanks and to bid me farewell. The next news I heard of him was in this letter, written a week after his enlistment—

> "A few lines to let you know I am all right. I thank you with all my heart for what you did for me. I like the work well. I shall always look to you as my firmest friend. I do not touch drink. I shall not touch it again. I have got some good mates. I shall be pleased to hear from you any time. I have forgot about the past. I have joined the Y.M.C.A. We have a good time.
>
> "Dear sir, I cannot tell you my feelings when I was amongst all those officers on Church Parade on Sunday. When I got in

church, I thanked God I had started on a fresh career. There is no one here knows anything about me, and I trust to God they never will do. Sir, if ever it is my lot to be able to do you a good turn, I will honestly do it. I shall be pleased to hear from you as soon as you have time to write."

Realising how slight was the help he had received from me, I could not but be struck by the man's gratitude. Week by week his letters came with unfailing regularity, always of the same healthy tone, always breathing the very spirit of sincerity.

In less than two months came the following—

"I am leaving Southampton to-night for the Dardanelles. I should have liked a few days' leave before I had gone, but there was not time. I shall always think of you wherever I go, and if God spares me I shall come and see you when I return. You will think they are sending me soon enough, but I have done nothing but study gun drill since I enlisted, and I have pretty well mastered it.

"All my people think well of me now, and they are looking forward to my safe return.

"I pray God every night to make a better man of me. If I come back again it will not be as the curse to my friends I have been in the past. I have good pals here, and they help to keep me right. If I do not come back, I shall have died an honourable death. I will bring my letter to a close, leaving myself in God's hands."

Several post-cards came from him, and I replied in a letter that I hoped would reach him early in the New Year. He seems to have grown impatient when he wrote the following on the 7th January 1916—

"Just a few lines hoping to find you in the

best of health as it leaves me at present. Sir, I have wrote a lot of letters to you but I have not had an answer yet. Some of the letters I have sent, the ships have been sunk, but I shall keep writing till I get one.

"We had a good Christmas, to say where we are. Let us hope that we all have a better one next year. It is a very nice place this, but there is nothing, only sand to plod through all day long. It would be quite a pleasure to see a green field. But we are all doing it with a good heart.

"Everybody is alike out here, officers and all. We all share our last cigarette with a mate. Sir, we often have a few services on Sundays, and a few sometimes in the week. He is a thorough gentleman, is our Chaplain, and a man that is respected. He just talks to you same as any other man like us would do. To put it short, he is a proper toff.

"Sir, I never forget you, and never shall do; and if I get back to England you will be the first one I shall call and see. You must write me plenty of letters. I think I have told you all this time, so I bring my letter to a close, hoping to hear from you soon."

Conscience-stricken, I wrote to him on the night that I received his letter. My note reached him, also the few cigarettes which accompanied it. It pleases one to think of him distributing the cigarettes among the "toffs" he so admires, who, being the gallant gentlemen they are, would think no scorn of the gunner did they know his story, seeing the noble atonement he is making for a wasted past.

II.

A CORPORAL AND HIS SERGEANT.

I BELIEVE, though many do not, that to attempt to read criminality in a man's face is an entirely futile proceeding. I admit that many criminals look the part. But then, so also do many whose lives are patterns for all who would be most correct. On the other hand, there are those whose faces are quite angelic, yet who, when they call at my house, put me always to the trouble of making sure they have not, when leaving, purloined the cat, or something else equally difficult to lay hands on, and equally useless when stolen.

A nodding acquaintance with the average ex-convict an hour after—nicely shaven, decently clad, and well groomed—he has left prison, would cause many experts in reading faces to revise their opinions as to the probable accuracy of their conclusions. Right or wrong, my opinion is that it is the dress and the grooming which makes all the difference. Many excellent peers, judges, clergy, magistrates, actors, policemen, journalists, authors —particularly authors—would stand a poor chance of escaping the adverse judgment of the average reader of faces, were they placed in the dock unwashed and unshaven for a week, disreputably clad, and with neck decorated by crumpled collar, badly soiled, or by dirty muffler.

A man of my acquaintance, about the most scrupulously honest and industrious person I ever knew, followed the occupation of bill-distributor for twenty-seven years. Then that work failed, and I asked a friend to engage him as light porter. There was a difficulty. If given that position it would frequently be his duty to carry parcels to the houses of certain well-to-do persons whom it was desirable not to offend. Weather-beaten for seven-and-twenty years, his face, never picturesque, was wont for sake of economy to carry hair between shavings which took place every third week, while his garb was adopted on principles of utility rather than ornament, and a muffler graced his neck even on Sundays, though he was a regular church-goer. My friend, with a knowledge of my client far less intimate than my own, knowing his reputation for honesty and industry, considered him as a likely candidate save for his personal appearance. He had not seen him for more than a year, but he well remembered that. Being the excellent fellow he is, he promised to look again at my protégé, whom I had taken care not to have there, and a day was fixed for an interview.

Clean-shaven, clad in a neat suit and a tidy overcoat, the muffler giving place to collar, front, and tie, an ancient greasy cap exchanged for a new clean one, boots brightly polished, the candidate put in an appearance in due course, and won.

"I say," my friend remarked to me privately after engaging the man, "what a difference clothes make. I could hardly have thought it possible for him to look so respectable;" and he insisted on repaying the sum I had spent in making the man presentable, though he was already giving the fellow higher wages than he had ever received before.

Placed in dock, as he used to look, that man

would have been written down off-hand by those who know a criminal by his face as of the very worst type of malefactor. Put there now, he would pass as a decent, honest, poor working man, exciting only sympathy until and unless he were fully proved guilty of some offence.

To bring the matter still nearer home, three experts have been good enough to say that I have not a criminal face. But I do not presume because of that. I do not attend Court in a scarf, and I shave above once in three weeks, lest I should develop the features of criminality.

Corporal Matthew Godber, the slim, girlish-looking soldier who served bravely enough in Flanders until his strange disappearance to be told of later, might well have declared with the famous milkmaid, "My face is my fortune." I will endeavour to set out why.

He was studying for the ministry when first introduced to me. The excellent clergyman who gave him private lessons in Greek and Latin also offered to lend him such books as he required, Matthew's parents being small shopkeepers who could barely afford to gratify their ambition for their son. But Matthew was of a semi-independent turn of mind. Too proud to accept the vicar's offer, he determined to obtain the books for himself. The bookseller from whose shop he had got them began to notice that the unaccountable disappearance of a volume synchronised with a visit from Matthew, and a strict watch upon the student's movements was instituted. Caught walking off with a good copy of Thucydides, the contents of which, with luck, he might be advanced enough to grapple with intelligently three years later, he was asked if he had paid for it.

The question hurt him beyond measure. That was evident from the innocent expression on the

open face which met the bookseller's gaze, making the honest tradesman more than half ashamed of his suspicions, although they were confirmed by Matthew's improper possession of the book.

"I'm very sorry," Matthew apologised. "I thought it was the book I brought in with me. I must have picked it up by mistake." And he went back into the shop, still apologising, laid the calf-bound Thucydides down, took up a cloth-covered Virgil, then went his way, smiling his apologies still.

"The worst of it is," the bookseller told me, "I feel sure that he had no book at all when he came into my shop. Unfortunately there was a pile of copies of Virgil, and several had been sold to cash purchasers by an assistant who was quite unable to say the exact number. It seems scarcely possible that he should have the cheek to carry so crafty a trick through, but I believe he walked off with my Virgil since he could not have my Thucydides. He meant taking something. He was not particular what."

The information was given me in a vague sort of hope that I should be able to use it in an endeavour to nip the youth's criminal career in the bud. I pointed out that I had nothing to go on. I could not visit him at home as was suggested, and lecture him concerning a crime about which the evidence was too weak to secure a conviction, for, of course he would strenuously deny the accusation.

The bookseller's interference was not left without reward, however. Matthew ceased to patronise his shop, transferring his valuable custom to another friend of mine who dealt chiefly in second-hand books. The benefits brought by the new patron were soon apparent. Stock that had long refused to move began to go. But there was no corresponding financial gain. Matthew was

watched once more. The old trick was repeated, but failed. This time Matthew was walking off with the bookseller's Taylor's 'Holy Living.' Matthew was very sorry. He had mistaken it for his own Keble's 'Christian Year.' Unfortunately for Matthew, this bookseller had but one copy of the 'Christian Year' in stock. It bore on the fly-leaf the name of its late owner, from whom it had been purchased only the previous day. Confronted with this sure token that the book was not his, Matthew could only blush, declare that he must be run down; he certainly ought to have had his own copy with him; he must have left it at home by mistake.

Having missed other books, my friend conceived a curiosity for examining Matthew's home library, and intimated his desire to do so. Matthew made excuses so long and involved as to become tiresome. A policeman was called in. Matthew was given into custody, and a search of his father's house revealed pawn-tickets relating to thirteen volumes which the dealer in second-hand books claimed as his property, and thirty-seven which the seller of new books identified as his. Matthew had disposed of the books he had stolen for a tithe of their real value, since the pawnbrokers did not want goods of that class at all, and only took them because of the customer's special pleading. He was "hard up," he said.

Standing in the dock in due course, Matthew found his face to serve him well on his first appearance before a Bench. The prosecutor was merciful, saying frankly that he was sorry to see the youth making so bad a start, and that his sole object in taking proceedings was to endeavour to get him to see where his evil habits were leading him.

"He doesn't look a thief," the Chairman told me in a stage whisper, urging me to do what I could for Matthew: "I like his face. He isn't the sort we mostly see here. I don't think he'll give you much trouble."

So Matthew was tenderly admonished as to his future conduct, and bidden place himself under my guidance.

Training for the ministry had automatically come to an end, to my mind, and I was considerably surprised at the reluctance with which the clerical private tutor came to take the same view. I was not so much astonished at the parents' attitude. They were, not unnaturally, disposed to regard their boy as a victim of a malady which linked him with members of a higher grade in the social scale. He was a kleptomaniac, not a thief. He had been studying very hard; no doubt that accounted for a low nervous state which induced the disease. They suggested a rest at the seaside, after which they failed to see why he should not resume his studies. Matthew himself entirely agreed with his parents' conclusions, and displayed a tender concern to meet their wishes, especially as regarded the seaside. He went there for four weeks. He stayed away from home four months, but three were spent in prison. He had suffered from a further attack of his malady in a place where the disease was not understood.

My own sympathies might have been keener but for a subtle connection between Matthew's pilferings and cigarette smoking. I dismissed kleptomania at the outset. I called it thieving. To steal a thing, pawn it, and spend the proceeds in indulgence, is a common practice of a common thief. There is no hope for a thief except he can be got to obey the Apostolic injunction: "Let him that stole steal no more:

but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good." There was no kleptomania nonsense about St Paul.

Resting upon the Apostle's counsel, I interviewed Matthew's uncle, a brick-maker, who agreed with my proposal that it was advisable to offer the youth a start in his brickyard. He would not be treated as an ordinary workman, but he would nevertheless "work with his hands" all the same. All dreams of the ministry were seemingly gone for ever. Where my counsel had failed, imprisonment succeeded.

Labouring in a brickyard was little to Matthew's taste. Still his uncle was a remarkable man, and kept him working at an uncongenial occupation for twelve months. He humoured Matthew; but he did not spoil him.

At the expiration of a year Matthew's father came to me, begging that I would secure lighter work for his son, who had developed a nasty cough, he said, which would bring him to an early grave unless preventive steps were taken.

I was left to find out from a visit to the uncle that Matthew had already terminated his engagement there. "You'll make naught of him," that good man told me; "he's a born thief. I'd been missing brasses from the engine for some months before I suspected him. I caught him red-handed. He looked in my face as innocent as a sucking dove and declared he was only taking them as models for some drawings he was making at home. So I went to see how many more models he'd got. I found none; but when I came back, one of my men told me he'd seen Matthew go to a metal-dealer's shop a good many times. I went to that shop. And you'll never guess what that cheeky devil had done. He'd actually been and sold my brasses on a dozen different occasions, telling the shopkeeper that I was a bit fast for money for

wages, and had sent him to raise a trifle with what he'd taken!

"Well, when I heard that, I went to his father's with a bit of life. Matthew was in. I told my tale straight. He never moved a hair! When I'd done, his father turned to him and said, 'Did your uncle send you with the brasses, Matthew?'

"That was more than I could stand. What! I said, do you mean to say you doubt my word? That settles it. I never want to see any of the lot of you again. If ever you set foot in my place again, I says to Matthew, I'll chuck you into the mill and grind you up with the clay. Then I came away, and left them to it."

He "left me to it" as well. The parents were doing badly in their business, the takings of the shop barely meeting the most carefully cut-down expenses. I had more than a suspicion that Matthew was helping himself to the contents of the till. It was manifest that something must be done to put him once more in the way of earning his living. His father's idea of lighter work than he had previously was of course unthinkable. There was nothing wrong with his health, and light jobs ought properly to be reserved for men whose conduct renders them worthy of consideration.

I offered him work, carting rubbish. He took it on the understanding that both himself and myself would keep our eyes open for "something better." He found the "something better" in a fortnight. It was a job as bookmaker's clerk.

The parents were pious folk. It grieved them to know that Matthew had taken to an occupation so unpromising. They blamed me, I felt, for not recommending him to a more respectable clerkship. But he was untrained for office work, even had it been possible to speak of him to any master, having the character he had. I was con-

vinced then, as I am now, that by his own fault he was fit for nothing better than the post I placed him in. It was up to him to regain character, and strive for something higher as the reward of good, honest work.

Thanks to Matthew's innocent-looking face, the bookmaker regarded himself as possessing a treasure in his new clerk from the week preceding the Lincolnshire Handicap of a certain year, right on to within a fortnight of the close of the same flat-racing season. The bookmaker, being given to "welshing," found himself able at his convenience to leave many a race-course with money placed in his hands by backers. His clerk's trustworthy aspect of countenance caused his own absence to be unnoticed until too late, and then, Matthew's chagrin at the trick his master had played had so convincing an appearance of reality that irate losers of money seldom had the heart to treat the clerk to the customary ducking, never better deserved. In this way the bookmaker amassed quite a respectable sum. He was a stout, red-faced, jovial young fellow, clad usually in a sporting suit with bright flower in button-hole, and, for sake of pulling my leg, was wont to thank me now and then for putting in his way the best clerk he ever had, well knowing, of course, that I much resented Matthew's mode of livelihood and predicated no good of it.

But in a certain late November the bookmaker sought me out and opened his griefs to me. He had attended a given race meeting the week previously, and, while he visited a booth to secure refreshment, Matthew had conceived the time to be favourable to follow his master's example in walking off with the bag. The scene was quite impromptu. There remained the forlorn hope that Matthew would await the bookmaker at a certain rendezvous, much as was customary

with characters reversed, in scenes prepared by careful rehearsal previously. That comforted the bookmaker somewhat as he crawled out to the lonely bank of a shallow pond into which he had been thrown by disappointed and enraged clients, who refused to believe a tale that his angel had sinned, and who behaved so abominably rudely that, preferring that the breadth of the water should continue to divide him and them, he failed to return for the remaining shreds of betting paraphernalia, or for coat and cap sadly disfigured through their violence. But this life is full of disappointments. Matthew failed to turn up at the rendezvous. He was not giving an impromptu rendering of a familiar scene. He was engaged in an entirely original piece. The bookmaker saw his servant no more for many a day. And he came to me, of all people in the world, for sympathy.

"Don't be too hard on him," I counselled; "he's been a good servant to you; see how often you've thanked me for putting him in your way. You must have found him a treasure, or you'd never have got it into your head that I deserved any thanks. I've noticed this sort of thing before. When a man's delighted with his good fortune he's ready to hug everybody, whether they deserve his gratitude or not. So come, take the rough with the smooth. Remember how he pleased you for eight months. Be charitable: perhaps he's had another attack of kleptomania."

The bookmaker looked in my face and smiled a broad smile, good to see. "You've got your chance, and taken it," he said; "well, I'm not grumbling. If I'd not wanted you to have your turn I shouldn't have come to tell you. We're straight now. But what can I do to find this bloomin' monkey? He's done me over for ninety-five pound. I can't afford to lose that, you know."

"When a man has kleptomania——" I began to reply; but the bookmaker interrupted—

"Kleptomania be hanged. He'll not have kleptomania long if I lay hold on him. That can be knocked out of him in about five seconds."

"When a man has kleptomania," I continued calmly, "the question I always ask myself is, Can it be contagious? Matthew had it when he came to you. Had you the disease yourself at that time, or have you got a touch of it from him? You see, that walking off with the bag trick—you're both pretty expert at it; wouldn't it pay you to sing low about Matthew?"

"Of course; of course;" he agreed, good-humoured still. "I'm not bothering any police about this job. Only, if you do happen to hear where he is any time, I'd like you to let me know, so as I could run over and see him myself. I'll serve my own warrant when I get his directions."

I never obliged. For one thing, it was no business of mine. For another thing, when next I heard of Matthew he was a guest of His Majesty, and one cannot go worrying His Majesty's guests in prison.

After walking off with the bag, Matthew went south. Dreaming of the Church, he had the fortune to light on an unfrocked young clergyman in a common lodging-house he entered. From him he purchased certain information and papers. The papers were altered by another occupant of the lodging-house, skilled in the forger's art. A month later Matthew became the curate of a vicar too careless to make proper inquiries as to his antecedents or to obtain the bishop's licence for his new colleague. "The Rev. Matthew Godber" held that curacy for a year.

It is a gratifying fact, that, although his face attracted to him the marked attention of a score of damsels, not a few of whom became goers to

that church after he became curate, the breath of scandal never touched him. All went smoothly, he made surprising use of the elements of training he once received, nobody dreaming for a moment of suspecting his credentials till a sensation was created by rumours of his disappearance from the place. The discovery that the funds of half a dozen parochial societies for which, as had been stated in the 'Parish Magazine,' "Mr Godber had kindly consented to act as treasurer," had disappeared with him, led to inquiries which revealed his duplicity and landed him once more in prison for a year.

But his face would brook no rebuff. Convinced in a month that Matthew was a changed person, the prison chaplain interested himself in him, and got a well-known Society to take him in hand on discharge. With incredible folly the offender was given a short training, and then sent to a post as evangelist, in which he was found labouring six months after leaving prison. In this capacity he gained access to private houses and to shops where his presumed excellent character allowed him to move with freedom. When he was laid by the heels at last, the number of his thefts was legion. For these he went to penal servitude for three years, and upon release, came again to me.

His parents had long been out of the shop by this time, and occupied a bed-sitting-room placed at their disposal by the charity of friends, who also provided a few shillings weekly for their maintenance. Matthew, seeing that it was impossible for his parents to take him in, was glad to accept the lodging offered him in the house of a collier living in an adjacent village, and work as a surface labourer at the pit. More than this, he thanked me for the trouble I took to get him settled, and stuck to work and lodgings for two

whole years, leaving everybody satisfied with his conduct, when he took his departure to set up as an insurance agent in a small town six miles distant.

I have no notion at all how he contrived to satisfy the Insurance Company that he was a fit and proper person to act as their agent. I have reason to suppose that he did not give the name of his old employer, the bookmaker, as that of a person willing to testify to his strict integrity, since that sportsman evidently knew nothing of Matthew's movements when he spoke to me of him months after the appointment. Let his contrivances have been what they may, he gained the appointment and did surprisingly well in it, once more thanks to his face. It was industrial insurance business. Success depended largely upon ability to wheedle women into insuring the lives of their husbands and children and kinsfolk by payment of small weekly sums. Many agents had called many times at many houses and utterly failed. They called the district a heartbreaking wilderness. To their surprise and envy, Matthew demonstrated the possibility of reaping a bounteous harvest in the wilderness. For few women could withstand the appeal of that innocent-looking face, and their sympathetic assistance enabled him to double his collections within a year.

His quiet, pleasing manners, too, secured for him invitations to take part in functions at a chapel to which he turned, seeing there was no opening for laymen in that place in the communion to which he properly belonged, and he was "on trial" for appointment as a local preacher when it became necessary for him to book a hurried passage to New Zealand. The Insurance Company had entrusted him with two hundred and eighty-five pounds to pay to the widow of a deceased tradesman whose life had been covered

by one of its policies. The temptation was too great, Matthew fled, and all dwellers in that place inquired as they remembered his vanished face, "Whoever would have thought he could do such a thing?"

I next heard of him from my bookmaker friend, who, having himself joined the Colours to earn rapid promotion, wrote me the following from Flanders in November 1914:—

> "You'll never guess who we've got with us out here. Nobody else but brother Matthew, the welsher, who diddled me out of ninety-five pounds in the days of long ago. I was glad to see him, but he wasn't quite so glad to see me. I let him know who was sergeant here in two tick-tacks, I can tell you, and I made it hot for him till I felt we'd come straight.
>
> "He's the same cherub he always was, for all the world like a good-looking monk or a pretty girl, the sort we see in carvings and pictures about here,—not the genuine articles —they'll stand idealising a good deal, them that I've clapped eyes on—they'd look better in pictures, I daresay. But brother Matthew is a picture, and no mistake. He doesn't look a day older than he did ten years since, and blowed if he doesn't get better looking. He's no moustache and no whiskers, and he doesn't need to shave. I've made a bit of my money back, taking bets on his being a man. He's fond of dressing up like a lass, so as to fool strangers, and with his slim form, girlish face and mincing manners, he'd take a sharp chap in. You gave me a bit of good advice when you told me not to be too hard on him. It was all fun, we know, but there's many a true word spoke in jest, as they say. He'll be worth a fortune to me yet, I can see that."

Then in February 1915:—

"Private Godber (Sister Matty) has just diddled two Huns in fine style. We'd had a deal of trouble with snipers who seemed to have the Devil for a pal, there was no other way of accounting for their getting to know so much about us. Two Belgian farm labourers used to work on the land near to our dug-out, and we asked them a good many questions, but could make nothing of them. They'd leave off work an hour or so before dusk, and then the sniping would begin. It looked as if the Huns didn't mean hurting them. I'll own up, I'd no suspicions myself about those two old knackers, and I thought it better sense than the Huns mostly showed, to waste no powder and shot on them, since, if they were wanted out of the road, Anno Domini would attend to that before long.

"But one day Sister Matty said, 'I'm damned if those old labourers aren't our friends the snipers.' He didn't whisper, and they weren't far away. They went mooning on with what they were reckoning to do, working their passage well from us, and then we noticed that they kept on the other side of the park,—that's what we call it, though it's arable land, for it's got the only pair of trees left for miles round —the snipers' trees, where they played their game from.

"'There,' says Sister Matty, when they'd stopped on the far side of the park a goodish while, 'they understand English, too. But they haven't seen my face; I watched that. Now I'm going to have a bit of fun out of that pair.'

"We were relieved that night. As we were retiring, Matthew sang in a whisper to the chaps who took our places—

"'Could you tell me, said he,
If any there be,
That will give me employ
For to plough and to sow,
And to reap and to mow,
And to be a farmer's boy?'

"Then he left them wondering what he meant, while I stopped to put things a bit plainer. Matthew was rare and busy while we were off duty behind the guns. He didn't rest much. His idea of rest was always devilment.

"On the morning of the day when we were due back in the trenches he came among us dressed up as a young Flemish damsel, and in such style that the Devil himself would have been deceived. Though we knew him we could have kissed him—he looked such a tasty tart. And he'd routed a bottle of brandy out from the Lord knows where. I reckon, though, some farmer's wife had made him a present of it (while he was a man, of course). He's a close follower of those parts of Lord Kitchener's instructions which he happens to fancy. You couldn't find anybody more courteous to women. He's took to kissing and hugging them because it helps him with the language, he says. Whether it's because of this method of studying it or not, I don't know, but he speaks the Flemish lingo like a native now.

"With her bottle of brandy in a little Flemish basket, Sister Matty looked bewitching as she stood among us. We all went mad. Those who didn't want the wench for her beauty wanted her for her brandy. I was among them that made a grab at her. But she slipped us all. 'Fie, fie,' she said, shaking her head at us, and rattling off a lot of foreign lingo, like as if she was right down vexed.

Then she changed, gave us all a smile, and went away singing—

'Do not forget me, do not forget me,
Think sometime of me still:
Do not forget me, do not forget me,
Remember the maid of the mill.'

About thirty-six hours later I was in the dug-out again when I saw the Flemish maid walking our way with those two Belgian peasants leaning one on each arm as drunk as sweeps, but cuddling her and stroking her cheeks now and then for all that. It was enough to make a cat laugh.

"When they were about a hundred yards off they stopped, and she seemed to have a lot of arguing with them; then she led them along the park parallel with our trench, keeping about a hundred yards off all the time. I'll take a hand in this little game, now, I says to myself. It was turning dusk, so I took three men, and we crawled on our bellies right up behind the lovers without being seen. Two of us laid hold on each peasant, and each was so infirm that he had to be carried to our quarters. Neither could speak, and neither could hold a limb still. As for the wench, she flew off like the wind, and landed in our trench a couple of hundred yards away.

"Those Huns saw they were done, and it sobered them. We searched their trees, and found about as much ammunition as would last for a year, and four of the finest rifles and the best range-finding gear I ever saw in my life. They told us they never had such a take in. When they saw the Flemish damsel, they thought of nothing, only being in clover, and she plied them with liquor while she made up her mind which she'd choose to embrace her first. Then she suggested a walk, and

the walk landed them where they found they'd had a dream.

"Sister Matty naturally couldn't stand the sight of the lovers being shot. She did all that was wanted after she'd recovered from the fright their arrest gave her; then we let her have a bit of rest to steady her nerves. She's all right again now, pretty dear."

Only once did Private Matthew Godber send me a letter, about the most uninteresting document I ever received. I gathered from it that he had been in New Zealand about five months when war broke out, and that he returned to England at his own charges, joining the Army in London in October 1914, and being sent to Flanders within a month. But the letter contained little other information, and it might have been written by an entire stranger. I do not think that Matthew would have written at all but for the fact that I had sent him a trifling gift which he felt he must acknowledge. He made no mention at all of the reference my letter to him contained regarding the exploit of "Sister Matty," unless one considered his remark that he was enjoying himself as connected with that.

Still, various letters from the sergeant made up for Matthew's defects. I heard regularly month by month how both were progressing: how the sergeant became sergeant-major, and the private became corporal; how the corporal was sometimes a man and sometimes a woman, for he continued to be a most serviceable decoy for German snipers and spies; and, last of all, I heard of the mystery of his departing. That was told me by the sergeant-major as follows:—

"We've seen nothing of Sister Matty for three weeks. She went out one morning, sweet and beautiful as ever, looking after a Flemish gentleman whom some of us thought

might be a Hun, his movements having seemed rather suspicious to us, although the Captain couldn't see things that way.

"Next morning, when day broke, we looked out on the park to see if any reason could be seen for the rifle shots which had banged from the Huns' trenches about dusk the night before. A body lay on the ground about a hundred and fifty yards from our little show. There was nothing very strange about that; there are a good many bodies about; but there were none in this particular spot the night before. Something told me it was the Flemish gentleman, and as soon as it was quite dark I crawled out and began to haul it towards home. The brutes may have thought I was abducting Matty. Anyhow they put a searchlight on, and peppered at me for all they were worth for about an hour. It was downright wicked of them to waste ammunition like that. They'll never win with such extravagant ways! I laughed fit to split my sides when I got used to it, lying under the Flemish gentleman for a shield, and never getting so much as winged.

"When they stopped for a rest, I moved on with my gentleman, managing to get near to our trench this time before the ball opened again. It was deuced hard luck that they hit me in the leg with a stray shot, for the leg has had to come off, and welshing is off with it for good: for you can't run away very fast on a wooden leg. A nice reward for trying to serve your country! My honest occupation gone! You might speak for a comfortable corner in the workhouse for me, if you don't mind.

"I rolled over into the trench all right, and made sure it was the Flemish gentleman I'd

got. There was no doubt about it. There was Sister Matty's ring in his pocket. There had evidently been a struggle. The marks of sister's fingers were plain to be seen on his throat. The German trenches were nearest. The Huns must have heard the scuffle and begun to fire. Papers found on the body showed that the Flemish gentleman was a German spy. They were important papers, too,—plans of our positions and what not, which Sister Matty did well to keep from the Huns.

"They took me to the base and shipped me to England, and here I am in hospital bereft of my best girl and my best leg at one fell blow.

"But I don't think that the pretty wench is either dead or a prisoner. She's missing, but she'll be found one day. She said many a time how anxious she was to know what was going on in Antwerp and a few other places, and she'd be going there some time. My opinion is that she set off on her travels when she'd finished with the spy. One of these days she'll come back chock-full of information, and sweet and beautiful as ever."

Six months have now gone without a word from Corporal Godber. I fear the worst. But the sergeant-major limped in to-day on crutches to assure me confidently—

"She'll turn up yet. You'll see her pretty face again before I occupy that cosy corner in the workhouse, sir. You mark what I say. She's a thousand miles an hour too fast for that lot to catch her. So cheer up."

Though the odds against this hopeful conclusion are overwhelming, it can do no harm to wish quite fervently that the sergeant's optimism may prove well grounded.

III.

SERGEANT WARD, D.C.M.

WHEN I was eight years old, and a newly admitted member of a village choir, I had six weeks' bliss in anticipation of a choir-supper. The evening came along at last. It was a rough-and-ready affair, but none the less enjoyable for that. I was plentifully helped to roast beef; mustard was not much in my line, but being too shy to refuse the offered mug containing that condiment, I burdened myself with a prodigious supply by innocently ladling out a teaspoonful. Then trouble came. Though I completely destroyed the flavour of the meat in a laudable effort to consume what I had contracted for, I was left at last with weeping eyes, beef all gone, half my mustard untouched, and an overmastering fear that I had eternally disgraced myself from the unintentional greed I had displayed.

Fortunately a farmer's son, my senior by about ten years, observed my tears. He instinctively divined the cause of my grief: "Never mind that mustard, Roberd; don't bother about it; it'll be all right; leave it," he counselled in tones of the richest music my ears ever heard. Unspeakably grateful, I took him at his word. Plates were cleared away; the next course was introduced; my happiness was restored.

I had been deeply impressed from earliest infancy with the idea that all waste is sinful. That was what caused my confusion. No doubt, I went beyond the intention of my teachers. Still the too plentiful helping of oneself to condiments was severely repressed as tending to encourage waste and extravagance in more important things.

The effect of that teaching remains with me to this day; and my wife, trained under similar conditions, is of like mind with me in this matter. We sometimes smile as from force of habit we find ourselves struggling to consume the bit of bread we dare not waste. And our children are growing up in the same old-fashioned atmosphere. Nothing is allowed to be wasted in our household. We take no credit for that. It is just that other men laboured and we are entered into their labours.

Now, were our teachers wise or unwise in suggesting to us that the seeds of crime lie hidden in wasteful and extravagant habits? It is not usual, I believe, in these days, to teach such a doctrine. But can it be true after all? I have reasons for concluding that crime does grow out of wasteful and extravagant habits very largely indeed.

Such cases as that of Edward Ward are by no means uncommon: cases in which drink or gambling hardly enter; where neither idleness nor incompetence as workmen can be alleged; where men drift into crime solely because they have contracted habits more expensive than their means will sustain.

Ward's father was a master joiner in a moderate way of business, who apprenticed his son to a builder, allowed him ample pocket-money until the completion of the apprenticeship, and then permitted him to retain his wages while providing him with free board, lodging, and clothing. The

result of this folly was not apparent, strangely, in any neglect of duty.

Edward was fond of the building trade. He was a capital all-round man. Every employer was pleased with his work.

He married, and found it impossible to maintain a wife and a home with what had barely sufficed for pocket-money, even though, thanks to his father's generosity, he had been presented with the furniture, since he had saved nothing himself. His father helped him out of a hundred financial difficulties until means and patience alike failed, and Edward appeared to retrench somewhat. Unfortunately appearance was deceptive. He was helping himself to other people's money.

He had keys which gave him access to an office containing a desk in which a seldom-used cheque-book was kept. It related to an executorship account for which his master was acting trustee. He misappropriated the book, and drew cheques by forging his master's signature so cleverly that for eight months he had an unsuspected run. Then he was discovered, and prosecution followed, with conviction, and sentence to three years' penal servitude.

The expenses his father incurred in instructing Counsel for the unsuccessful defence proved too great a strain upon the financial stability of a business already suffering from shortage of capital, and the joinery concern went into bankruptcy. The father took a situation as journeyman, but was not happy. He was a widower with three daughters at home, all trained in idle and expensive habits, not one of them possessed of the smallest idea how to do anything useful. They bitterly resented the change of circumstances brought about by their father's failure. There was little comfort in that house until, finally, the oldest girl managed somehow to get

a situation as barmaid, and to put her two sisters into similar positions, leaving the father at home alone. A sister of the old man then went to relieve his solitude and to look after his house. He struggled manfully at his work, but his health gave way. His son had been in prison fifteen months when the Governor read him a letter in which I told him as delicately as I could of the father's death by his own hand.

Meanwhile Edward's wife had cleared off considerable outstanding debts by selling the household furniture, and had taken up work as a canvasser, living once more in her parents' home. She did not appear to feel any disgrace in the fact that her husband was a convict. I do not know that it was necessary that she should. Still, I should have liked it better had she remained in the seclusion of home when the day's work was done, if she must get a living in such publicity as the particular calling she had chosen necessarily involved; and had she spared some portion of her earnings towards repaying her parents the cost of maintaining herself and her child. Her conception of right made her feel at liberty to squander her money in fine clothes, in luxuries such as chocolates, and in amusements such as picture shows, of which she was a nightly patroness, parents and child being alike utterly neglected. Yet she was an intelligent, smart, self-respecting person, who gave satisfaction to her employer as a very clever capable canvasser indeed.

When her husband was released at the end of two years and three months, having the remaining nine months of his sentence remitted conditionally upon his good behaviour during that period, she was found to have made not the slightest preparation for his return. Her father had, moreover, been long away from work through illness,

poverty reigned in the home, and it was held impossible to receive Edward there.

I saw him on the day of his release. "Sir," he said, "I've done my time cheerful enough, only for two things. I know it was all my own bringing on. But I could never get my baby out of my mind. I kept thinking what a wrong I'd done him in branding him a convict's son, and I *did* want to see him many a time! Then there was my father—I felt I'd had a big hand in bringing his death on him. Now, I've made my mind up to look after that little lad, and live as he'll never know the wrong his father did once."

He went off to see the three-year-old son he was so fond of. He was received kindly enough by his wife's parents, who wept to witness the emotion with which he caressed his child. But they were forced to tell him they could not take him in for the night. An old servant of his father had promised to render him that service.

His wife came in from her duties while they talked. She greeted him with a stony stare and a curt "Well." Then she had tea without a further word, until, having left the room for awhile to make her toilet, she returned to give the child a cold kiss and to bid her husband good-night.

I do not think he expected much of her, but that stunned him. Her mother, who described the scene to me, said that she "never felt so sorry for anybody" in her life. "He sat in the chair with the little lad in his arms and nursed the child to sleep. Then he got him undressed without waking him, put his little night-shirt on, and carried him upstairs to bed. He stayed there ever so long in the dark, and when he came down I could see he had been crying.

"'Nobody seems to want me here but him,' he said: 'he does seem glad to see me, yet even he never speaks. He makes a funny noise now and

then, as if he'd like to talk but daren't. I expect she's told him he's to have nought to do with me. And whatever I've done, I did it as much for her as for myself. If I was extravagant and that, so was she. And she never bothered about where the money came from so long as I had it to give her.'

"I hadn't the heart to tell him as the little lad's deaf and dumb—not just then; of course he knows now—and I'm glad I didn't, for I think if I had, he'd have gone stark staring mad.

"He asked if I knew where she'd gone. I didn't; I shouldn't have told him if I had, though, for it wouldn't have been safe. My husband went with him to the neighbour's where he was to lodge, and left him there.

"When Fanny came home, about eleven, we told her she didn't ought to have gone on like that; but she only said she weren't going to have her life spoilt by him. He'd have to show he could keep her decent before she'd live with him again."

It was one of those difficult problems with which persons like myself are frequently confronted. Religion and sentiment alike demanded a reunion, from which experience and common-sense predicted nothing but misery and strife. And in support of the contention of religion and sentiment was the silent pathetic pleading of the afflicted child.

It was not easy to obtain employment for builders at that particular time, but a friend had promised Edward a chance at my request, and he started working on the morning following his release. He remained in the lodging to which he went on discharge, and in the first six working days earned less than a pound, bad weather interfering. He was consequently unable to make any substantial offer towards the main-

tenance of his wife and child. That did not help me when I interviewed Mrs Ward by appointment fourteen days after her husband's return, the parties not having come to an agreement without my assistance, as I had hoped they might.

I soon found that the woman resented such interference with her pleasure as the granting of my request for an interview involved. I saw her in the little parlour of her mother's house, about seven o'clock at night, the mother having made the place very comfortable in anticipation of my visit. Mrs Ward waited for me to open the discussion.

There she sat, cold, haughty, indifferent. She was a proud woman. Heaven knows what of. She was not ill-looking; she had a good figure, was well dressed considering her station, and carried that air of independence which comes of consciousness of ability to earn one's own living. But if these things constitute a title to the sort of pride I mean when I say she was proud, then countless women possess the title. She was just the average on these points. She was above the average in haughtiness, coldness, and selfishness; she was infinitely below the average in consideration for others, in affection for husband and child and parents, and in all those gifts and graces which go to make up that common humanity which binds us one to another.

"You know why I have called," I began: "it is to inquire when you propose setting up housekeeping again with your husband."

As her only answer was a frown, I went on—

"He has come back at an awkward time. There is little building being done, and the weather is against the doing of what there is to do. Still, he has made a start, and as the days get longer and the weather improves, trade will grow more brisk and he will do quite well. I was speaking

to his master this morning, and he tells me that he is quite satisfied with him, and that he will probably earn thirty shillings a week for the next two months, then from thirty-five to forty shillings for the whole summer."

"I shall not go back to him till he's something better to offer me than that," the wife said scornfully; "I am earning thirty shillings a week myself. Do you think I'm going to give that up for such a pittance?"

"I can't say," I answered not less scornfully: "you ought to do. As for your thirty shillings a week, you appear to make poor use of it. Why not help a little here since you are so well-to-do?"

It was a chance shot. Until then I had merely guessed that she gave her parents nothing for the maintenance of herself and her child. Now I knew it as a fact.

"What have you to do with my private business?" she asked angrily; "what right had my mother to tell you?"

"Don't be disagreeable," I counselled; "I have eyes to see. You cannot go on as you have been going on these years without spending every penny you can get hold of. I don't need telling that your mother has never had a farthing of your earnings. She has said no word to me about the matter. But what I have stated is true all the same."

"And if it is," she said defiantly, "what has that to do with you or any one else?"

"Only this," I answered: "I want to find out whether it is possible to make you see that it is an indescribably mean and contemptible way of going on that you have got into. Your father never earned more than thirty shillings a week at best. For four months he has not been able to work at all. His earnings and his savings

have been going for two years and three months to keep up this home, partly for you and your child. Yet you have earned, and spent entirely upon yourself, as much as he has earned for the support of four persons. You are robbing your parents of their slender opportunity of escaping the workhouse. They will go there presently, and you will not mind a bit.

"I should have thought that any person of proper pride and reasonable spirit would have seen that her husband's return caused to cease whatever claim she had upon her parents while he was away. If you must go canvassing, go canvassing. If you must win thirty shillings a week spending money, do so. But unless you are as mean as it is possible for a mortal to be, for goodness sake let your husband support you and give your parents a chance."

The child opened the door at that moment and peeped timidly into the room. A look of annoyance clouded the mother's face; she rose, pushed him away, called impatiently for his grandmother to look better after him, then shut the door, and resumed her seat.

I had hoped, however slightly, to use the child as a plea for the reunion I was seeking. I saw plainly now that I need no longer entertain any notion of that kind. She was utterly indifferent to her son. There was nothing for it but to continue on the lines I had begun.

"Let us look at things," I went on, "and see what we can make of them. Your husband was always extravagant. He spent far too great a portion of his wages upon himself after his marriage. But you did not suffer on that account. You spent twice as much as he earned. His father made up for the extravagance of both of you as long as he was able. When his help ceased, you knew. Yet you went on spending

just as usual. You must have known that your husband never earned all the money he kept you supplied with after that; but you said nothing, because you cared nothing, till the story of his wrong-doing came out.

"I regard you as largely responsible for his guilt, and I have far more pity for him than for you, because he has suffered for his fault and you have not.

"I was hoping you would be fair enough to give him a hand back to respectability, seeing that you helped to drag him down. I thought common justice would dictate that, just as I thought that ordinary pride and self-respect would prevent you from continuing to burden your parents when your meanness had been plainly pointed out to you. Well, it seems I was mistaken. I have met with not a few worthless persons, but I have met with none more worthless than you."

She had treated my long lecture with indignant glances or scornful smiles until now. But at last she burst out—

"If I'm to blame for what he did, why not punish me?"

"That would be impossible," I answered; "you cannot punish a thing void of feeling."

"Listen to me," she went on; "I'm not going to allow you to call me worthless. I'm as good as you or any one else."

"That is a matter of opinion," I suggested.

Then she wept. "I'll go back to him if he can provide a house," she sobbed, suddenly changing her whole attitude; "I shall go on with my work though, and mother must look after the child in the daytime. But if he disgraces me again I shall leave him for ever."

I sent for the husband at that. "Tell him your conclusion," I said to her when he had seated him-

self awkwardly, without a word of greeting from his wife.

"I've decided to try you again," she informed him coldly. "If you care to get a home together and to earn money enough to keep it going, well and good. I'm not particular. I can earn what I want for dress and pocket-money. You'll only have to keep the house going. If you don't care to do that, I shall go and ask the magistrate for a maintenance order. I'm not going to have it thrown at me again that I let my father keep me."

So that was the result of my homily. No doubt she had thought before of an application for an order. No doubt she knew that no order would be granted unless he refused to provide a home. My pouring of contempt upon her dependence on her parents caused her to make up her mind to put herself in the way of securing financial support from her husband in any event. Her consent to live with him again was dictated by considerations thus base. She had no affection for him at all.

They parted as they had met—not a kiss, not a smile, not a tender word, not the wave of a hand. I felt tremendously sorry for the poor fellow as we walked down the street together.

"I wouldn't go on with it," he said, "only for the child. When I've done work at night, I'll spend every minute with him, and he'll never be out of my sight on Sundays. He's fair wrapped himself round my heart. He's just as I pictured him when I was in prison—round red cheeks, black ringlets, eyes like an angel; I used to fancy I could hear him prattle," and the father's voice grew husky as he added, "you see, I never dreamt he was deaf and dumb. It was a blow when I found that out. It was bad enough while I thought he daren't speak to me; but the truth was ten thousand times worse.

"Still, for all that, he's the bonniest child I ever

saw. When he laid his beautiful soft cheek on mine to-night, I felt as I always feel when he does that—I felt I'd go through fire and water for him. I'll get a home together, God helping me, before long, so as to have him with me always."

But it was no easy matter to get a home together. He forgot his old extravagant habits in his efforts to save money. At the end of a month he had three pounds, which I considered excellent. I was consequently much annoyed to find that his wife had taken out a summons against him with a view to securing a maintenance order, seeing that, as she stated in applying for the summons, he had been out of prison six weeks, and had paid nothing towards her own or her child's support, though working.

Here was another difficulty, frequently met with in endeavouring to arrange reunions where the furniture of a house has been parted with, and must be replaced. My sorrow for the husband induced me to go to some considerable expense in enabling him to inform the Bench, when the summons came before the Court for hearing, that he now had a home to offer his wife, and her application was dismissed in consequence. Apart from consideration for the man and his child, it was not worth the trouble; but the man's gratitude was boundless.

Many a time did I call at his little house during the next few months. It was on the first Monday in March that he took possession. When I saw him that same night he had just lighted a fire upon returning from work to the empty dwelling. The furniture arrived while I was there, and I lent a hand in arranging it. I left him putting finishing touches to the place, delighted at the prospect of fetching his boy home next night. I was not in the least surprised that his wife had

not troubled to help in setting things right in the house, and I was glad that he took her callous indifference as unconcernedly as he did.

I wonder that he kept up the melancholy pretence of having a home for as long as six months, under conditions which prevailed during that period ensuing. When daylight dawned in winter, and at half-past five o'clock every morning in summer, he regularly left home for his work. At nine, his wife rose and followed the child downstairs, the poor little thing having dressed somehow and gone to play in the street long before. After a hurried breakfast she locked up the house, took the boy to her mother, and started on her rounds, not reaching home again until seven o'clock at night, when she merely called for a meal before tidying herself to sally forth again in quest of recreation.

Coming back day by day to his lonely house with a fireless grate, Ward made no complaint for the first three months. He was wont to light a fire, tidy up the place, prepare tea, and fetch his boy to share the meal with him. The child's mother usually came in after it was finished. She brought with her such food as she fancied, ate it mostly in silence, and went out. Then her husband would take the boy on his knee in the arm-chair in the chimney corner, and father and child be happy together.

It was on a Sunday that the first storm broke. On Sundays Mrs Ward's custom was to stay in bed until noon; her husband's custom was to rise early, prepare breakfast for himself and Bobby, and, if the weather permitted a long ramble, pack up food and take the lad out for a day. But unfortunately there were occasional wet Sundays. When cheap railway trip trains were running, these wet Sundays were made tolerable by taking a journey to some place where, if the worst came,

shelter might be found. Exactly a week before these trains began rain poured down one Sunday from daylight to dark.

To be quite frank, I must admit that Ward had gradually reacquired an inordinate appetite for cigarettes since his release, the gratification of which was a more costly luxury than I felt he could afford; I had consequently urged him to exchange cigarettes for the less expensive pipe and tobacco. It is not uncommon for devotees of the cigarette habit to spend a shilling a day on their hobby. Ward had certainly got as far as that, and it was as much because I feared he was lapsing back to the old extravagant follies that I spoke to him as anything.

It did not lie in his wife's mouth to find similar fault with his one vice, however, since he had the household maintenance to show for his thirty shillings a week or so, whereas she had nothing except what she expended on herself to show for hers. When she came downstairs at two o'clock on that wretched Sunday afternoon, to find the child sleeping on the sofa, and her husband reading a newspaper before a blazing fire, and puffing out clouds of smoke from a cigarette in a brave attempt to make the best of things, she acted foolishly in stalking to the street door, throwing it wide open, and exclaiming in tones seemingly addressed to some one in the street, but which were really intended solely for her husband—

"I wonder that child is not choked to death with your abominable cigarettes. The place isn't fit to be in. But that's all you're fit for: to lounge about a fire and read and smoke. You haven't a spark of ambition in you, and not an idea or a thought for anybody but yourself."

Ward went on with his reading, and said nothing, though her reference to the child touched his tenderest spot. He wondered whether his

tobacco smoke really did hurt the lad, and that caused him to let her other words pass unnoticed.

She flounced to the little place where their food was kept. In his capacity as purveyor, her husband had provided ample bread, half a pound of butter, a piece of cooked ham, a few slices of pressed beef, and a pint of milk. There was plenty of tea and sugar in the cupboard, but that was all.

Obviously when there is nobody to cook a meal it is useless providing food not already cooked, and there is not much choice of fare as a result. Mrs Ward was probably weary of the sameness of diet.

"I'm tired of this way of going on!" she exclaimed bitterly, stamping her foot; "there's not a bit of enjoyment or comfort in my life. I wish I'd never put eyes on you. You've never been any good to me, and never will be."

Still he held his tongue. He wished the weather had seen fit to allow him to be elsewhere. He had sense enough to know that the pent-up rage of three months was just bursting. They had seen little of each other during that period, practically all their waking hours had been spent apart, and in the little while they did pass in each other's society words had been few. It had not taken him all that time to find out that she hated him. He did not keep the home for her, but for Bobby.

"I'm a fool to stand it," she went on; "you're all right, laughing up your sleeve; but you'll laugh on the other side of your face yet. I'll not put up with it for ever."

He lighted another cigarette for the sake of doing something, and to help in resisting a growing temptation to make an angry retort. That was too much for her. She sprang to him, snatched his cigarette and threw it on the fire

with one hand, while with the other she smacked him full in the face. Then he spoke,

"You say you're a fool," he said; "well, you are. You think you'll make me strike you. Then you'll have ground for asking for a separation order. You'll swear you've had to put up with persistent cruelty. I can see through your little game, and it won't come off.

"While I gave you five pound a week, it didn't matter whether my poor old father paid it or I stole it. You never bothered how it came so long as you got it; you were all right. But I shall never take another penny of anybody's money for you any more. I'm earning all I can. I can't do more. There's a home for you as long as you want it, but you're not forced to stop. You can take yourself off and keep yourself as soon as you like. I reckon you'd be burdening the old folk again if they weren't short of bread themselves. You're mean enough for anything. I wonder if I'd stay here if I thought no more about Bobby than you do. Why, you'd thrust yourself anywhere to get kept. I know you well enough, and I know I've got to keep you. But it will be here. You'll get no separation. So have another smack!"

He held out his face to her in mockery. She burst into passionate tears, then, defeated and furious, threw a cloak over her shoulders and ran to her mother's house.

About that time Bobby began to sicken. Every Saturday afternoon his father took him rides on tramcars to the outskirts of the city, and every Sunday they went into the country for the whole day, the father seeking anxiously to restore the lad, and having pathetic faith in the benefits of fresh air for his case. Still the child drooped more and more perceptibly. The father was at his wits' end.

On the occasion of one of my visits to the home

I noticed an expensive rocking-horse which I was told was a present from one of Ward's sisters. I did not believe it. The tone in which the father gave the information did not ring true; and when I found two costly boxes of bricks, a skin cow which lowed, and a toy motor, worth at least a guinea, on my next visit, I knew that money was being extravagantly wasted.

"You are doing foolishly," I said to Ward; "you want to please the child—I know that. But what use is a cow that can low to a child who can't hear it? And don't you know it would delight him more to have any simple toy which he watched you make with your knife from a bit of wood than to be given the most expensive thing you can buy? Now, tell me, where have you got the money for these? I've tried to be your friend so far,—I want to be your friend still,—but I can't help you unless you are open with me. Tell me the worst. Things can't have gone so far wrong by now."

Thus encouraged, he owned that he had been borrowing money from his workmates, but promised to cease from his folly and to repay what had been lent him. He also realised with gratitude what he had not grasped before about a child's delight with the simplest toy, when Bobby went into an ecstasy of joy at the creation of a wonderful sheep from a bit of firewood skilfully treated by his father.

Perhaps Ward would have pulled together had the lad's illness not grown so much more grave as to render his removal to the children's hospital necessary. When, notwithstanding all that fatherly affection and the devoted care of doctors and nurses could do, Bobby passed away, all concern for home left the man.

"I've nothing left to keep it on for," he said; "she doesn't want it, and, anyhow, I'm not going

to share it with her. "I'll never forget your kindness in getting it together for me. But I don't want it any longer. Let it go."

I enquired how the rent stood. When I found that during the six weeks of Bobby's illness in hospital nothing had been paid, I wished that money spent by the father on flowers and grapes, which the boy was too ill to notice or touch, had gone elsewhere, but I had not the heart to complain. The dealer who supplied the furniture took it back, and allowed a generous sum for it. I was ten pounds out of pocket when I had cleared up everything. Ward declared that I should have every penny back.

But his wife began to be troublesome. She applied for a maintenance order now that the house she hated no longer stood in the way. He put in no appearance at the hearing, and he made no defence; so the magistrates gave an order for fifteen shillings a week.

"I don't care if it's fifteen pounds," he said when he heard; "I shan't pay a penny."

He had been out of prison now ten months, and his ticket-of-leave was expired. I quite thought he would return to jail rather than comply with the order. I was mistaken. When eight weeks' arrears had accumulated, and, at his wife's instance, a warrant was issued, he paid the full amount claimed, including the solicitor's costs at the hearing of the original application to the Court—a total sum of seven pounds.

The same procedure was repeated two months later, the money being again paid. All this time I had of course seen nothing of the ten pounds I was not to lose. But that troubled me less than the fact that Ward seemed determined to hide himself from me. He had left his place of work, leaving money owing to his mates, and on each occasion when the police found him for the

purpose of arrest he immediately changed his lodging.

It was just a year and a half from his first discharge from prison that I met him, after he had kept out of my sight for six months. He then appeared in the dock charged with attempted burglary. The police evidence showed that he had in his possession an expensive watch and chain, two costly rings, a valuable scarf-pin, and other jewellery. He had also a good stock of fashionable clothing, and plenty of cigars and cigarettes of rare brand. These goods were traced. It was found that he had purchased them all with the proceeds of robberies. He had lapsed back into the extravagant habits of his earlier years and added thereto. That was the short explanation of his crime.

Taking the view that some consideration might be given to the fact that he had lived honestly for at any rate a large portion of the year and a half he had been at liberty, the Court did not sentence him to another period of penal servitude, but to eighteen months' hard labour.

He did not return to this place when the sentence was discharged. I heard of him as being in trouble again in Manchester when he had been released nine months, and he was then given a further term of a year's hard labour. The next I heard of him was two years after that. It was in the form of a letter from "somewhere in France," as follows:—

> "You will be surprised to hear from me. I have often wanted to write, but I felt too ashamed. I have lain awake many an hour thinking of you, and what an ungrateful cur you must take me for. Yes, I have lain awake after turning in so tired that I thought I'd be asleep directly, but I was soon as waken as a cricket, and cursing myself for serving you as

I did. And I'm writing now to ask you if you'll write back by return and tell me you forgive me. I know you do, but I want it down in black and white, and I want to hear from you.

"I haven't a friend in the world to write to me. There's a young lady sends a letter now and then. They've started a scheme, you know, which aims at making it less lonely for friendless chaps out here, and she writes in connection with that scheme. She sends me a nice parcel now and then, and her letters are very acceptable. I am sure I am very thankful. But then she's as much a stranger to me as the people are whose writing I see in the papers. She can't say anything to grip me, like. She can't talk about old times and scenes and faces. She can only keep on telling me what a grand chap she's sure I am, with variations coming to the same thing. And I know she's a thousand miles wrong. And I feel a hypocrite, and ask her to draw it mild, but it makes no difference. She doesn't understand, and I can't bear to tell her right out that Sergeant Edward Ward, who won the Distinguished Conduct Medal at Loos, is an old jail-bird, whom she wouldn't touch with a long pole if she knew the truth. For I don't want to lose her letters. They do me good, even if they aren't like the letters of a body you know.

"So I took an oath I'd write to you as soon as I got the chance. It was while I was in the trenches last week that I made up my mind. I saw a fellow there named Tony Barrow, a sapper, a decent sort, and he was as proud as a peacock because you'd written to him twice in a fortnight. He's a bit soft in some things. We all know he's

been in prison, for he's too balmy to keep his mouth shut, and he's told everybody what you did for him when he came out. I haven't told anything about you to anybody. Happen I should have done, only I'd no letter, and they'd have wanted to know how that was. And what a skunk they'd think me when they knew why!

"Well, I am a skunk. But I'm anxious to mend. Indeed I am. I'm writing now to try and prove as I mean what I say. I haven't forgot those ten pounds of yours which I owe you; nor I haven't forgot what trouble you took with me, and how I went to the devil again. No, I've forgot none of it. I can't. Would to God I could!

"It was while we were digging a new trench, something happened which nearly drove me out of my mind, only the week before last. One of the fellows uncovered the body of a little lad, the very image of Bobby — curls, angel's face, and just about his age. There was a leg short, and a hand. Those devilish Huns had cut them off. I can't bear to write about it. We made a little grave in a place we thought not likely to be disturbed, lined it with roses, and laid him in it. We risked our lives to get those roses; but there were enough to put a layer six inches thick between that little face and the cold clay, besides leaving his grave all snug and pretty. Then we left him. But God help the Huns who did that thing when we lay hold on them!

"There, I'm forgetting myself. I was going to tell you that that night started me afresh with what the doctor calls insomnia. And I've slept very little since, and something tells me I shall not sleep much till I've played

the man enough to write and beg your pardon for being what I have been.

"I made it all right for Fanny [his wife] to draw her separation allowance. I hadn't seen her since I saw you last, nor heard from her. But I know she'd keep herself clean and straight. She was always mean, and thought first, and second, and for ever, of number one. Nobody else came in. But she'd keep herself decent. I've no manner of doubt about that. I wrote to her, care of her master, to say what I'd done, and asked her to write back. She must have got the letter, because she's been drawing the allowance. But she didn't write to me. It doesn't matter. Our marriage was a mistake, like all marriages are where a man looks only at a smart appearance, and a woman only thinks how much money a fellow will addle [earn].

"Well, you see things different out here. I used to think she'd an idea I was getting money on the crook all those months before they found out what I was after with the cheque-book. I don't know as I'd any right to think that. My opinion now is that she never bothered her head to wonder where the money came from at all. And anyhow I took it, not her: so she isn't to blame. She never really cared for me. But she deserved better than she got. I'm sorry I've spoilt her life. I never saw a finer-looking lass—just like a queen. And she'd a clean mind. And because she's a married woman she'll look at nobody else till I'm dead. So I don't grudge her the separation allowance. She deserves it better than many, even though she won't write to me.

"I must stop now. The Y.M.C.A. hasn't

enough paper in all its huts to let me write all there is to say. I wanted to tell you how it is I came to join the Army—you see I had to change my name—and how I liked the training, though I hadn't much of that, joining in August, and out here in October, and the times we had in the trenches all through the winter. It killed better men that cruel winter, and the trenches waist-deep in mud. But I never felt a penny the worse.

"I've had a scratch or two from the Huns, but nothing serious enough to cry about or to go in hospital for. They offered me a bit of a rest at home about a month since, but I said no. Let those have it who've homes to go to. My place is here. This is as much home to me as anywhere, worse luck. But I don't grumble. I'm well aware who's to blame.

"I must try and tell you the news another time. Do write, sir, and tell me you haven't turned me down. You know when a man's trying; and I'm sure you'll give me a cheering word."

This letter reached me in August 1915, a year after Ward joined the Colours. I set out at once on a search for his wife, visiting her old employer first. He could not tell me her whereabouts; she had left him to engage in munition work in this city, he believed, but it might be elsewhere. A call at her parents' old home revealed the fact that they gave up the house about the time that Edward was convicted of attempted burglary. The new tenants did not know where they had gone, but neighbours thought it was to the workhouse.

A relieving officer was able to confirm this. He had himself issued the order for admission. The old man would never be able to work again.

The scanty savings of the couple were exhausted. They were in debt to more than the amount the sale of their household furniture would realise. The daughter would make no provision for them. There was nothing for it but to recommend them to take the course adopted. They were now quite comfortable in the "Old People's Homes" of an institution conducted on intelligent and humane lines of policy.

A protracted search was fruitful of the discovery that Mrs Ward had done well for herself in changing employment. Since she earned three pounds a week in exchange for the former thirty shillings, it was open for me to question whether greed or patriotism were responsible for her decision to help her country in a time of stress. With her separation allowance she was not doing badly. Yet she saw no shame in suffering her parents to remain chargeable to the funds of the Guardians. It had come about as I had foretold years before. The woman was selfish and callous beyond reach of shame.

She received me with a fervour to which an iceberg was warm. For all I could say, she would make no promise to write to her husband. The allowance was hers by right. She had nothing to thank him for, she said. If she began to correspond with him, probably he would feel entitled to return when the war was done and make himself a nuisance once more. The matter required thinking over. She would say neither yes nor no to my request at present. If she decided to write she would send me a post-card.

As a consequence, in my letter to Sergeant Ward, it was the fact that I was greatly delighted to hear from him which took up most of my space. I made an appreciative reference to his comrade Tony, but slurred over what he had said concerning his wife.

Before I thought it possible he answered this letter with a gush of gratitude too exaggerated for quotation. There was a good deal said too about Tony, but of his wife there was no word.

Nor did he refer to her again until four months later, though I had seven letters from him in the interval. Then he wrote these words:—

"I was dreaming last night, out here in the rest camp, that little Bobby came to me as I watched in the trenches. There seemed to be a gas-cloud coming at first, and I seemed to clap my respirator over my head, quick. I couldn't see very well then. But after a minute or two I tore the respirator off again, feeling it was a false alarm. And instead of the gas-cloud there was a fleecy cloud like silver, and Bobby was wafted along on it.

"'I've come to see you, father,' he said, laughing and shaking his curls, while his eyes fairly danced with joy. Then I sat down in the trench and took him on my knee. But I couldn't say a word to the child: I was so delighted to find he could speak. And while I was thinking of something to say, the silver cloud came up again, and he rode away on it, still laughing, and waving his hand.

"I'm not superstitious, but it means something, Mr Holmes. I don't think I shall see Bobby again just yet, myself. I think it means that if the mother has done with me for good, the child is mine for ever. He was sent to cheer me up a bit, and make me do my duty."

Twelve days later a woman whose only son served in Sergeant Ward's company came to me with a letter, weeping bitterly. The letter was from the Captain. It told how, far away from the trenches, a stray shell had burst where the men rested, killing her boy, with the sergeant and

fifteen others. As she sobbed out her grief she drew from her bosom a bundle of other letters from her son, and indicated a wish that I should read them, since "they showed what a good lad he'd grown into." She was right: they did. And it was particularly pleasing to notice also certain references to Sergeant Ward, which told that he, too, had lent a listening ear to the faithful ministrations of some nameless pastor whose denomination was not hinted at. I sympathised with that broken-hearted mother as best I could.

Three weeks later the sergeant's widow passed me in the street, dressed in deep mourning, and looking quite conscious that her garb of woe added to her attractiveness. She could not write her husband a word of forgiveness or hope, or sympathy or affection, while he lived; yet when he died she could bring herself to an unseemly pretence of sorrow like that!

Turning from her my thoughts wandered to Ward's last letter, and found pleasure in the fancy that his dream had come true. I pictured in imagination the warm contrast with that cold repellent wife: a little curly-haired, ruddy-faced child, mute no longer, tripping with eager feet through golden gates to ride on a silver cloud with gladdest heart and sweetest voice to welcome a long-looked-for father to the ever-ready always waiting place, provided even while he was nothing worth by that kindest and most merciful Redeemer Who, perhaps, employs His little ones on just such angels' work as this.

IV.

BOMBARDIER BUXTON.

It is recorded of Bishop Bonner that he complained about being troubled with work that was none of his; that his brother bishops passed on to him awkward cases with which they could not or would not deal. Though having no pretensions to the celebrity of the bishop, I sometimes share his complaint. It sometimes seems scarcely fair that offenders from all parts of England should be thrust upon my hands. That is when the offenders, by refusing my offered help, fail to please me. At other times their presence is welcome enough.

Bombardier Buxton came to me as a gift from the south eight years ago. He had been lively in his early years, making many appearances before a County Bench, until, when fifteen and a half, he was sent to enjoy the advantages of Reformatory training until nineteen. At the institution, he was engaged in learning shoemaking when he was not breaking out. He broke out altogether six times. When caught and taken back, he submitted to punishment with cheerful resignation while meditating some fresh plan of escape. Being an unusually sharp lad, he contrived, at such intervals as he cared to devote to instruction, to acquire a capital knowledge of the trade he was put to. When the period of

detention had expired and he was placed in a situation by the Reformatory authorities, he was found able to discharge any task his somewhat exacting master saw fit to set him.

But cobbling was altogether too humdrum a life for him. After five months, from pure desire for excitement, he broke into a small jeweller's shop and stripped it of its valuables. That escapade earned him six months' hard labour. He went then to another master in another small town of the county to which he belonged, and attempted to settle once more at his trade. This time he did not last a month. Temptation came in the guise of a fair, which he attended in spite, or perhaps because, of his employer's emphatic command that he should not go near. A farmer who had taken too much whisky wandered among the crowd, the mouth of a leathern bag containing money hanging invitingly from his pocket. Buxton, not yet owning that name—he adopted it later—failed to resist the bag's silent appeal. Transferring it to his own pocket, he made haste to put the breadth of the fair ground between its owner and himself.

But he was an open-handed person. He had no notion of keeping the prize selfishly for his own comfort. Brushing aside all convention in the matter of introductions, he made friends of youths whom he had never seen until that instant, and treated a full score to whatsoever they cared to demand to eat and drink.

The farmer's wife discovered the loss of the bag the moment she recovered her husband. Her biting tongue, whatever it did for him, gave information to the police, who were already cognisant of Buxton's lavish generosity. Three hours after stealing the purse the thief was confronted by the farmer and his irate wife. I must mournfully add that regret for his crime seemed all

forgotten when the scamp described to me, with many a pantomimic gesture, the behaviour of that good woman, and I hope he misread my character when he said—

"If you'd seen how she went on you'd have died. It would have made a pig laugh to hear the way that old Dutch made love to her darling, and to see the interesting side-glances she kept darting at me as she spared me a word or two, instead of taking a breath before she turned the tap on for him again."

He went cheerfully "into the jug," as he termed it, for another six months for that offence. Another situation, still in the cobbling line, was procured for him on his discharge. He kept that for three months, then went stealing again; and sentence of a year's hard labour was meted out to him, to be followed five months after his release by three years' penal servitude for a further act of larceny, all other efforts at reformation having failed.

Recommended to me as a capable shoemaker, which he was, and as a changed character, which he was not, he came to take up any situation which I might see fit to procure for him. After one interview I preferred not to recommend him to any employer, but I offered to set him up in a humble way on his own account if he would consent to my proposal that the sum of three pounds, entrusted to me on his behalf as his gratuity earned while in prison, should go in that direction.

There was at that time an infirm man of my acquaintance unable to continue the boot-repairing business he used to carry on in a small workshop in a poor district of the city. This man sacrificed his tools and a small stock of leather for two pounds. Twelve shillings sufficed to provide Buxton with a week's board and lodging.

Six shillings and threepence went for extra leather and nails. There was one shilling and ninepence left.

I had given him a series of lectures on his fondness for intoxicants. He had agreed that this had not a little to do with his getting into perpetual scrapes. I had suggested that he should write out a promise to abstain in future from all alcoholic beverages. He had accepted the suggestion with cheerful alacrity, and written out what I wished in good style and an excellent hand.

Now, when I desired to give him the one and ninepence due to him, I found myself with no coppers, and had to choose between getting a florin changed or else giving him a shilling and sixpence, leaving threepence owing to him. There was no good reason why, with many people to try and help financially, I should make him a present of threepence which he did not need, so I decided to owe him that sum till a more convenient season, getting change involving the taking up of more time than I was at the moment able to spare.

"You want one and ninepence," I said after reiterating how the rest of the money had gone. "I hope you'll buckle to and get on well. You ought to do. The shop's in a good position, and you're sure of plenty of work. Here's eighteenpence: I haven't threepence just now, but I'll call in a day or two and let you have it."

"Now look here, Mr Holmes," he said, a benevolent smile lighting up his roguish face, "you've been a good friend to me. You keep that threepence and have a quiet drink with it."

There was irresistible humour in the suggestion. "But," I said, struggling to appear serious, "surely you know I'm a teetotaler! I asked you to do without intoxicants as I do, and you wrote out

a pledge. You don't think that I want to drink stuff that I tell you to do without!"

"No," he assured me; "I don't want you to go in with me. Have a quiet drink—when you're away somewhere—on the sly, like."

There was no explaining to a man like that. He went his way to settle down and deceive one into the idea that he had completely turned an awkward corner and become a respectable law-abiding citizen. I do not know but that he deceived himself also. Anyway, my good hope was rudely shattered some nine months later when I found him in the police cells, arrested on a charge of burglary, for which he went to a further term of penal servitude, and I saw no more of him for years.

Then on the 13th of September 1915, as I sat in my office, a loud knock was given on the door, and in response to my invitation to come in there entered a khaki-clad man of middle height and strong build, with a plump round face wreathed in smiles, pulling his cap from a close crop of thick black curls. His merry black eyes danced with amusement at my evident inability to identify him.

"Good-morning, sir," he said, swaying to and fro in a manner suggesting intoxication, "here we are again, and as the old girl said to her husband at the fair, neither use nor ornament to nobody, only fit to guzzle and swill."

He certainly had done what he could to justify that character. I hurried him into a chair before he sat down on the floor. It was plain that he was already suffering from relapse after the exertion of pulling himself together for the purpose of visiting me. Then I sought to discover who he was, not an easy task in his condition. He produced various documents, pretending to assist me while hugely enjoying my perplexity, seeing

that both the Christian and surnames thereon were quite unfamiliar to me, as well they might be, since he had invented them when he decided to join the Colours. Acting, I suppose, on an inspiration to atone for the trouble he was putting me to, he produced a bottle of rum from his tunic and held it towards me.

"Have a quiet drink," he urged affectionately; "it's prime stuff, and warms the very cockles of your heart."

As soon as he mentioned "a quiet drink," it struck me that Bombardier Buxton was the old acquaintance I have briefly described. And so he was. When he had sufficiently recollected his wits I got from him an account of how he came to wear the King's uniform.

"I sneaked over here," he said, "where I'm not quite as well known as in some parts, and I walked into the recruiting office like a man and gave them my name as Ben Buxton, and your name as the chap I worked for, knowing that with all the crowd there in that first week of the war, and with half a million recruits wanted, they'd make no enquiries apart from what they asked me.

"'Have you been in prison?' the recruiting officer wanted to know, reading from the attestation form.

"I looked him full in the face. 'Have I come here to be insulted?' I asked him as severe as I could. 'Do I look like a jail-bird? What do you take me for?'

"He was a decent sort. 'I beg your pardon,' he said; 'we have to ask, you know: it's all right,' and he wrote a big No in that space in the form. So I got through all right, and by strictly minding my P's and Q's I went sailing on smooth water till my battalion was ordered to the Dardanelles, where we've been through

about five months' hell. Flies, flies, I never saw anything like 'em. They're sociable enough here, upon my word, but there, why, their affection is downright embarrassing. You can't stir for 'em. They cover the ground for a carpet for you to walk on and be comfortable like; they sample your drinking water and your food, not in companies but in Army Corps, so as to see nobody's poisoned it. If you get wounded they crowd to staunch the bleeding."

He went on with his interminable dissertation on the plague which all our gallant men found so intolerable in the Gallipoli Peninsula, and I made no more of him that day. I have, of course, given the sense of what he said, and left out a good many lurid adjectives, and the awkward hiccoughs with which his speech was plentifully interspersed. In truth he was not in any way fit for polite society that day. Certain idiots, at large it would seem, now that many lunatic asylums are in use as hospitals for our wounded men, had lighted on him and temporarily turned a good soldier into a besotted fool, whom I found it impossible to restrain from continuing to taste of the contents of the bottle he had offered me, with the result that his condition grew steadily worse. There was nothing for it but to get a cab and convey him to the house of an excellent man, himself once a drunkard, now reformed, and willing to do anything and to suffer any inconvenience on the off-chance of leading another into the way of abstinence.

Buxton stayed at this lodging three days. I saw him four times during that period. My friend kept him sober, and conversation with him became a pleasure. It turned out that he had never seen Gallipoli. His vivid narrative was borrowed from a man who had fought there like a hero and endured like a Spartan till he was

brought low with dysentery and despatched home straightway to recuperate. Buxton was merely on six days' leave before leaving England for his first taste of active service. As it chanced, his destination was Gallipoli, but he was not aware of that fact when I parted from him.

It was not till December that I heard again from this master of romance. What I heard then was as follows:—

"Bombardier Buxton 'unto the well-beloved Robert, greeting,' as it says in my Y.M.C.A. Testament. I often think of you sir, and now that the flies are gone I could almost wish you here. Only it would be as much too cold for you now as it was too hot in the glorious days of summer. Not that I'm cold. It keeps me warm, shaking my sides out to see the get-up of some of our chaps in their skin-coats and whatnots. As for the Turks, they look too soft to laugh at anyhow in their outlandish dress.

"It's all the fun of the fair every day, and nothing to pay. The old firm in the trenches opposite hangs out its sign to try and do a little business now and then, and we take up the odds, and the race begins. It's been a dead heat most days lately. Our stable's not going to get itself penalised with extra weight unless it's worth while. It's the big handicap we're out to win, and we're carrying no penalties that we can escape. The old firm across is pretty wily, too. But we'll best him at the game before we've done, and no welshing at that.

"Things being dull, they've appointed me organist here. The Chaplain's a fine chap; he's made a pal of me since I started a hymn for him when he'd such a cold he couldn't sing as good as a crow. It wasn't a very

grand start, I own; but it was the best I could do, and if I'd only happened to pitch it half an octave lower it would have passed muster right enough. As it was, most of the fellows got sore throats trying to reach the top notes, and making a mess of the whole thing. So I've got to start with a pitchfork now. Where they routed it out from I don't know. It's here, anyhow, and when we're ready for the hymn, I just strike it on my boot-heel, and give them the note, and we're off like blazes. We like a sing-song, you see, and I know the tastes of our lads, and ring the changes on six hymns, which is as many as I know to be sure of. But they're six clinkers, and the chaps are satisfied. I wanted to give up the organist job, but they wouldn't hear of it. They say the singing's the best part of our services by a long chalk.

"As I have said, our Chaplain's a right good sort. He can't talk much in public, because he was neglected in his youth, and never taught how. He says, He that hath yahs to yah, let him yah, when he means 'ears to hear'; and that booby sort of way of talking spoils him as an orator. We've a score of Methodists and Salvation Army chaps who'd lick him into fits at that game. I wish I could give a better account of his preaching powers, but I can't; he's a frost at the job, and he owns to it. 'I didn't come out as a preacher,' he says, 'but as a pastor. I love to deal with men one by one, and to make friends of them,' and he does. He must be madly in love, too—they say that love's blind—or he'd never have made such a pal of me as he has.

"I'm down as a Church of England man, being nothing particular; so last night he

asked me if I'd been confirmed; and I said I hadn't. 'I thought not,' he said; 'that's why I don't see you at Holy Communion. I wish we'd a Bishop here, so that you could be confirmed according to the Church's rule, then I'd be glad to welcome you, and I'm sure you'd come.' I told him it would be a good thing if a Bishop were here. It was only a little lie, and it pleased him. We've been wonderful pals ever since he came. He's always ready to do anybody a good turn, and always jolly only at a service. He pulls a long mug then. I don't know why. He laughs and jokes and calls me the 'organist' before a service begins, and after its over; but while it's on you couldn't get a smile out of him for a fortune. Which is a mistake, and gets him misunderstood. You see, he can't get to the trenches where a good many of the men are mostly, and he never has the chance of a chat with some of them, so they judge him by his service mug, and his reading, and his sermons, and call him a swank-pot, and say that they wouldn't bother to turn up if it wasn't for the hymns. And that's bad for the organist, because it makes him conceited."

During his tenancy of the cobbler's workshop, I could always tell when Buxton was attending to his business by his habit of singing over his work. He had quite a good tenor voice, and I could well understand how useful he could be in leading the singing of simple hymns, especially as shyness was never a weakness with him. I replied to his letter, telling him I had been unable to find anything quite like its opening in the New Testament, but that, as far as I could make out, it was intended to express a personal affection which I entirely reciprocated. I further stated that I was

glad he was so well employed, and trusted that the singing of hymns and the pastoral work, if not the preaching of the Chaplain, would lead to his being a suitable candidate for confirmation when a Bishop chanced to enter Gallipoli, or when he should himself return to England. That seemed to trouble him.

"I'm not going to be confirmed," he wrote back in a great hurry; "I'm not such a white-livered hypocrite as that. I'm no saint, but I've not got as low down as that yet. It was to please the Chaplain that I told him it would be a good thing if a Bishop were to come. I know that he took it that I'd be confirmed if that happened. That was where my little lie came in. It pleased him, and did nobody any harm; just as my poor old mother used to promise me all sorts of things when I was a kid, 'when my ship lands.' It pleased me, and cost her nothing. So I shouldn't like you to think me worse than I am for that. I've known a lot of hypocrites, in my time both at the reformatory and in prison and out, who would pretend to be ever so pious so as to curry favour. That was never a game of mine. I do hope *you* will understand. You seem to be the only one I can open my mind to, because you know about all there is to know of me for one thing, and because you have the knack of making a chap feel you don't expect to see a silk purse made out of a sow's ear for another: you'll be glad enough to get one of bristles so long as it's an honest purse, good enough for what you want it for—one feels that. It would knock me into a cocked hat to think that you wrote me down for one of the white-livered skunks who reckon to be pious when they're not. I've told the Chaplain

since I got your letter that I've no notion of being confirmed, so I've set that straight, and now I do hope you'll be satisfied."

Of course I hastened to reassure him, delighted to find his attitude towards serious matters, all things considered, so satisfactory. His next letter was more after the manner of the first:—

"Sometimes it seems as if it would never suit me to be living a decent man's life. While I am here it's all right. The constant feeling that there's danger and a Chaplain hanging about makes one different; and an organist has a sort of position to keep up. Away from here I shan't have much chance of such a job. Any mug will beat me in a competition at home. It will be blowing the bellows that they'll offer me. And that won't be in my line; there's no style about it.

"It seems queer that I can't be like other folk. Anybody but me would have been at that cobbling job now—an independent tradesmen on his own—getting starred as an indispensable man,—that's a bit of all right, isn't it, sir? Yet I must chuck it up and go burgling for a change. I can't tell you how sick I got of sitting in that shop, cobbling day after day. And if I were back I don't know what there is I could take to for long. 'I'm a lot better here, even if I get shot. The life and the excitement when there *is* a bit of fun on is worth all the risk.

"Yet even here I'm about fed up with the old firm's sign hanging out everlastingly, and no business doing. I'd desert if there were anywhere to go to where things are more lively. And my throat sometimes feels like a limekiln; and poor beast, it can find no refreshment in the sort of booze they serve out here. I wish we could have a move on.

Our Oriental friends talk of moving us into the sea, I hear. Oh, if they would only get at it. Anything for a change!

"It's just my luck to have dropped into the most religious set out in Gallipoli. Such praying and psalm-singing as there is you never heard. I feel quite out of it. There's a grand young fellow, a Scotchman,—about as much Scotch as me, don't you know?—who pals on with me now. He knows you, perhaps for the same reason as I do. I asked him once if he'd ever been jugged, but he didn't seem to understand me, so I let it drop. I was glad I did when he lent me your book. I couldn't be sure after reading that that he wasn't one who'd started wrong, but had more sense than me and pulled together early. And if that was so, seeing he thinks so much about you, he might think me a cur for serving you the dirty trick I did over that workshop.

"Well, Scotty's great on praying and reading the Bible. He doesn't thrust his opinions on me, but he makes me feel uncomfortable. I think sometimes I'll tell him my record: that'll choke him off. And then I think again, I don't want to lose the best pal I've met in the Army. So what am I to do—tell him everything, or hold my tongue and burst?"

I recommended Buxton to have a confidential talk with the friend he spoke of, if he felt he could entirely trust him, as, guessing who the man was, I strongly hinted that I thought he could.

He never got my letter. A week after it was posted I received the following from the comrade who was the "best pal" he had "met in the Army":—

"This time, for once in a while, I am not writing primarily about myself. It is about

a friend of mine, not unknown to you, that I want to tell.

"You may remember that I mentioned in a former letter how, when I was coming out here, I bought a copy of your book at a railway station. As I was reading it, Buxton asked to be allowed to look at it. 'I know that gentleman,' he said when he saw your photo on the cover; 'you might lend it me when you've done with it. It will be interesting.' And as I had already read it through more than once, I handed it to him straightway.

"After that he seemed uncomfortable, as if he wanted to ask me something, or else to make a confidant of me. This went on for a few days. Then he asked in a semi-jocular manner if I'd ever been jugged: not being quite sure of my man at that time I thought it best to pretend not to understand him.

"Three days ago, however, he was in a very serious mood. 'Can I speak to you, Scotty?' he asked when we were alone together; and he told me how you had befriended him, and how he had treated your kindness.

"'There,' he said at the close, 'what do you think of me? Aren't I a beauty, eh?'

"There was only one honest thing to do. I told him my own story. When I had done, he said—

"'Nay, you're no worse than me: call us both alike: call us both rotters.'

"We talked together a while longer, then he exclaimed quite suddenly—

"'I'm glad we've had this talk, Scotty: now, what is there to hinder me from being like you in something besides devilment? You're changed; you're no humbug; you're running straight. Just show me the way you do it.

Show me how to pray, for a start. Lay me on the track, good and true.'

"I did the best I could.

"The very next day the Turks dropped a shell within four yards of where he was stationed. It burst; and his end came as painlessly as suddenly. There was time for neither look nor word. I escaped by a miracle, unscathed. Doubtless the Reaper knew which was fittest for harvest."

V.

DRIVER MACDONALD.

He was a tall, gaunt youth, twenty years old, with deep-set blue eyes shaded by plentiful sandy eyebrows, and he owned a wonderful crop of hair of similar hue. His face, as he stood in the dock, was too sullen to describe as indicating his normal appearance. Usually he had a careless, good-natured expression of countenance which made his plain features quite winsome. But the charge was grave. No doubt he had gone headlong towards ruin, since his folly had brought his career as a medical student at a certain Scottish University to an early end three months before. To put it quite plainly, he had succumbed to the temptation of wine and women, and, being ejected from the University, had made up his mind to go to the devil at express speed.

Penniless when he left Scotland, he travelled to this city, accompanied by a woman five years his senior, and without payment of railway fares. By accident he landed here unnoticed. He took wrongful possession of two Gladstone bags lying on the platform, called a cab, and was driven with the woman to an hotel. He coolly bade the cabman wait till he had booked a room and opened a bag, had the surprising good luck to find money at the first attempt, paid the cabman, and went to join the woman in interviewing the hotel book-

keeper in quest of a bedroom. Although this proceeding with the bag, taking place under her nose, gave the book-keeper a sort of excuse for believing in the respectability of the couple, being a woman of the world she certainly should have regarded it as most unlikely that they were married. She failed in her duty to the public when she consented to receive "Mr and Mrs Macdonald" as guests.

They stayed a week. Then they hired a cab once more, paid their bill, and with their luggage were driven to another station. Macdonald elbowed his way with the bags to a loaded luggage-barrow on the platform. That particular barrow contained several bags greatly resembling the purloined pair in his possession. He deposited these beside the barrow, and waited till the attentive porter in charge was drawn aside for a moment to answer a question addressed to him by the female accomplice who had come on the platform after Macdonald by a different entrance. Then he instantly took two bags from the barrow, replacing them with the pair in his possession just as the train steamed in, and the crowd made a rush for places.

"Porter, is this the London train?" he asked with the air of a man who had waited impatiently for an official to conclude a lengthy chat with a lady.

"Gone," the porter replied laconically, seizing his barrow and pushing it to the luggage-van: "platform number five."

"And the next?" Macdonald continued, following the porter up with consummate impudence.

"Two hours—four-thirty."

"Rotten; well, I'll go and have a drink;" and picking up the newly stolen bags he left the platform, to be met by the woman at the station exit.

They went to another hotel, and stayed three days, dealing with the proceeds of the theft ex-

actly as on the former occasion: the money found in the bags they appropriated, the clothing and valuables they pawned, the documents they burned. Then they filled the bags with old newspapers, and again visited the station on the same errand, and with similar success. This time they took tickets, and, having seen the Gladstone bags filled with paper carefully put in a train bound for London, they crossed to another platform with the pair they had taken in illicit exchange, and journeyed to a town twenty miles distant from this city, where they again found it possible to obtain a bedroom at an hotel of respectable standing, and where they stayed a fortnight, purloining six more bags by the same kind of fraudulent procedure.

They returned here, and the evil game was played out. Macdonald was charged with a series of thefts, found guilty, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. He declared the woman to be entirely innocent, going out of his way to whitewash her to such an extent as to excite strong suspicion against her. As a matter of fact, she was an accomplished thief as well as a prostitute, and the real instigator of the plan which had worked successfully for too long. But the police had no evidence. At the time they were not aware of the part she had played in attracting porters' attention while the thefts were being committed. So, by no means satisfied with Macdonald's story of the woman's innocence, and regarding her indeed as probably at least as much to blame as he was, they were reluctantly compelled to let her go.

A lady, who regarded her as the wronged misguided person the youth's tale to the magistrates would seem to show, took her to a shelter for friendless and fallen girls. There the impudent hussy stayed for one night, and found that too long

a period for the concealment of the fact that she was hopelessly immoral. The matron of the shelter had handled not a few despicable women in her time, but she was glad to be rid of this creature next day. The worst girls in the place shrank from contact with her, so lewd was her conversation.

It was my hard task to endeavour to keep Macdonald separate from this harlot-thief upon his return to liberty. If that were not done it was useless attempting anything else.

Sometimes it is well to be suspicious. Because I reckoned at first sight the woman was what she proved to be, and recommended the purchase of a railway ticket with a view to the creature's return to her place of birth, I was counted a hard man by the lady who wished to help her. I had the trouble now of seeking her in the streets of this city, to which she had turned to ply her loathsome trade. It was not until I had thoroughly frightened her by suggesting that a good deal only suspected was definitely known, that I induced her to betake herself to the Metropolis, since London had the unenviable distinction of being her domicile. For all my trouble I do not know that she would have consented to stay away from this place after leaving, but for the fact that the porter whom she had certainly once, and possibly more than once, beguiled into taking his eye off luggage under his care chanced to be on duty when her train came in.

"Have you had that wench for aught?" he asked in a stage whisper of the detective officer in plain clothes who had kindly assisted me in the business of making up her mind to go, and was, sportsman-like, seeing the job through.

"Why?" the officer enquired. "Do you know anything?"

"Not much," the porter answered, with a wise

wink that might mean worlds; "anyway, she's as well out of the road before she's jugged. Our chaps (railway police) are looking after her if you aren't: I know that."

Both the detective and myself noticed that the woman turned deadly pale and trembled violently as the porter spoke. She was glad to pretend to busy herself in adjusting her few belongings in the railway carriage until the train started, when it was evident she was immensely relieved. I left the station with a feeling that she would visit this city no more of her own accord.

But would Macdonald seek her out on his release from prison? That was quite likely. He was at an age when he was peculiarly liable to blind infatuation, and his passionate defence of the woman at his trial made me feel he was devoted to her, little lovable as she seemed.

Time alone could solve the riddle. I could only make arrangements to give him a start far away from her when he came out of jail. To this end I communicated with a lady whose name he had given me as able to tell his history. I was anxious to test his story that he was an orphan, and that this lady had promised his dying mother to give him a good education so as to fit him for his father's profession as a medical man. To tell the truth, I did not believe it. Angus Macdonald was very much more Scottish than the youth who claimed the name. I thought his whole tale about as genuine as his claim to Highland blood—it being perfectly evident that he was a Cockney.

There was more truth in the tale than I had bargained for. His real name had been changed for Angus Macdonald by the caprice of his foster-mother. He was the illegitimate son of a lady's-maid. His mother died in giving him birth. Her mistress adopted him out of pity, and quite un-

conditionally. It was not because of any promise to the dying mother, but simply because he had brains that he was thought likely to make a medical man, and it was not his father, but the father of the lady who adopted him, whose profession he was given a chance of fitting himself for. His own father was a gardener.

The lady, naturally indignant at my story of his conduct, washed her hands of him, and suggested that he should enlist. She forgot that a conviction for felony rightly barred entrance to the Army in those times of peace. When that was pointed out to her, she replied: "Very well, let him do what he can find to do. There are railways being made, and reservoirs. Let him get work as a navvy. He is fit for nothing better."

I concurred; and when he came to me I introduced him to a foreman who put him to the hardest work he had ever attempted. It was digging out stiff clay preparatory to laying the foundations of a huge manufactory. When he had worked a day, he came to me with hands blistered and bleeding from using a shovel and a wheelbarrow, and declared that the work was too hard. I ridiculed his tale, told him it was that kind of labour or the workhouse, and asked what he had expected to be given to do. He replied that office work would suit him. I suggested that possibly he knew an employer anxious for a clerk of his sort of character, and without experience, though I did not.

I further pointed out that by his own folly and wickedness he was friendless, penniless, and helpless. He had hoplessly ruined every chance of ever becoming a member of the honourable profession his early training was designed to prepare him for. There was nothing at all to be done save to earn his own living honestly in the best way he could, and the only opening I could

see was the one I had put him to. He must stick to work as a navvy, rough as it was, till he had regained character. He was big enough and strong enough for the job. If he only persevered he would soon forget the discomfort of blistered and sore hands, which all men have to experience in the early stages of application to heavy manual work.

Perhaps I might have got something lighter for him to do had I tried. But I did not try. In my judgment hard work is calculated better than anything else to wean a young man from vicious and immoral courses. Moreover, the strumpet in London would be less inclined to return to him, should he get into communication with her again, were he employed as a navvy than as something sounding less commonplace and more financially promising. The character of the foreman who gave him work at my request and took him to lodge in his house—above all, the character of the foreman's wife, an elderly, motherly woman, with a family of nine sons and six daughters, all "married off and comfortable," and with a deep respect for her training to "hate idleness as they would hate the devil"—had much to do, also, with my decision.

I had no reason whatsoever to regret this course. Macdonald settled down, and for more than two years conducted himself satisfactorily in all respects, gaining the good opinion of the foreman and his wife to such an extent that, when work ceased to be obtainable here, and the contractor's plant and staff removed elsewhere, he was invited to go on to the next job, and went. Here, after doing navvy's work for a year and a half, he was promoted to be assistant foreman, and aspired to the dignity of wearing a collar and tie during working hours, his duties being the superintending of men, taking account of the

hours they worked, attending to the repairing of tools and wheelbarrows, and generally helping the organisation necessary to secure profitable results from the employment of a large number of men. This particular contract was small, and soon completed. The concern moved on to a job in Surrey. Here Macdonald worked for nine months, then took a holiday in London, from whence he failed to return, as he had promised he would.

When next heard of he had secured a position as night porter in a London hospital, and being suspected of robbing patients brought into the institution while unconscious, sometimes from intoxication, sometimes from more serious causes, he was watched. Being caught red-handed he was committed for trial, the former stealing of railway passengers' luggage being found recorded against him — thanks to that admirable system whereby the police are informed of the deeds of felons wheresover their crimes take place. A woman was charged with him at the Court of first instance, but there being no real evidence against her, she was not sent on for trial with him. His sentence for this offence was eighteen months' imprisonment with hard labour.

Regaining his freedom, he immediately went back to the old trick of stealing luggage, and was soon found out. This time his companion in crime was arrested in the act of pawning jewellery taken from a pilfered bag. They went for trial together, and in spite of Macdonald's declarations that the woman believed the jewellery to be his, both were found guilty—Macdonald of stealing goods, and the woman of receiving a portion of the same, well knowing them to have been stolen. Such was the woman's plausibility, and so copious were her tears, however, that she escaped imprisonment, being bound over in

her own recognisances to come up for judgment if called upon. Macdonald was warned that penal servitude would be his punishment should he offend again; meanwhile he was sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour for a further term of eighteen months.

About six weeks before the expiration of this sentence the excellent Chaplain of the prison wrote to me on the man's behalf, begging that I would receive him on release, and secure for him a start of a similar sort to that given him nearly six years earlier. "He informs me," the Chaplain wrote, "that you have handled him more firmly and wisely, and yet more kindly, than any one else; and he really seems sorry that he did not profit by your help."

The same firm of contractors for whom he had worked being once more engaged in operations hereabouts, I went off to see what could be done. Finding that the foreman I had previously discovered to be such a splendid fellow was not taking part in this particular work, but had charge of a job at no great distance from here, I decided to see him again. The result of an interview with this good fellow and his equally good wife was an offer to receive Macdonald on exactly the same terms as those he enjoyed when he took it into his head to disappear. He could share their home, and there was a vacancy for him as foreman's assistant.

Sitting down the same night I wrote the Chaplain a letter while my enthusiastic admiration of this generosity was fresh. The Chaplain read the letter to Macdonald, and the reply, written on his behalf and containing many of his own words, was worthy of the lines I had written. The exquisite goodness of the foreman and his wife was evidently appreciated to the full. Their offer was accepted with profound

gratitude. Nor do I think that Macdonald dreamed of casting this kindness behind him. He never came to me or went to them. I am confident that he fully intended to do both these things. But the strumpet met him at the prison gate. She had money. She purchased railway tickets for Liverpool, and they went away by train together. The prison authorities informed me later how they understood that the pair afterwards booked passages for the United States. It was not till the war had raged nine months that I heard of them again. The news came in the letter following:—

> "You will be astonished to hear from me. I will be frank. I am writing to ask a favour. Otherwise I should not write. Will you send my railway fare from Liverpool, and when I get to you, will you gain me admission to one of your hospitals? I am not ill. I have tried to join the Army, but am rejected for a couple of small defects which slight operations will readily remove."

There was little else, and I do not quote that little lest it should create an undeservedly unfavourable impression. An old friend of mine used to declare: "When a man's penniless, he's soft; he feels soft, and he *is* soft." That is true. A quite wise man with little experience of men in the mire of poverty would have regarded the letter as an impertinence. Wise or unwise, I myself sent the money requested.

Macdonald came the next day. He was now thirty-three years old, and much changed. He had a heavy moustache like his bushy eyebrows and thick crop of sandy hair, tinged with grey. His deep-set blue eyes had lost much of their merry fire, and his rugged face was deeply lined. His tall figure was still spare and powerful, but

his wretchedly thin, seedy clothing told eloquently of abject poverty.

"I worked my passage," he said, "getting three pounds for stoking during the voyage. Then I played the fool in Liverpool for a night, getting rid of fifty shillings. I had made sure of securing enlistment, and when I was rejected next day because of an injured finger on each hand, I sobered down a bit and began to think. An old medico in the lodging-house reminded me that slight operations would remove the defects, and I tried to get attention in Liverpool, but was referred to the Poor Law Hospital, where I was ineligible, not being domiciled there. The game seemed off, when I thought of you. I wrote, and you know the rest."

I knew the rest of that short chapter I told him; but a good deal had been written in the volume during his stay in America; I should like to hear something of that. What had happened since he put me to the trouble of making arrangements for his benefit six years before, and then disappeared?

"Nothing good," he replied. "My friend met me outside the prison gate. She had saved money: and she suggested that we should go to America and make a fresh start together. We should have married, but she had a husband, a brute whom she could not live with. She was a great deal better than you think, sir; anyhow she was everything to me. We seemed fated to come together. When I took that holiday to run up to London while on the excavation work, it was to meet her. We had been corresponding ever since I got a step up the ladder, and though I had no intention of staying in town, when we met I could not leave her. Perhaps you were right in thinking of her as instigating the thefts put down to my account. But she was meant for a rich man's wife, and saw

no harm in our helping ourselves to the goods which fortune had deprived her of. I did all the stealing, and it was only fair that I should take the blame.

"In America we went on much as here. I varied the plan a little. There's more opportunity there. For instance, in a Western state I was in partnership with a doctor, a drunken rascal, who found out that I knew the rudiments, and presented me with a degree so as to secure a *locum* on the cheap while he was on the burst. But that didn't last long. I mention it merely as an example of the false pretences by which we contrived to exist. The extraordinary thing is that, though I scarcely earned an honest penny while we were there, we were never detected in crime until three months ago. Then, as I was lifting a couple of bags I had exchanged, the owner gave me a couple of sharp blows with a life-preserver, breaking a finger on each hand.

"'Maybe that'll teach you to be honest, sonny,' the lantern-jawed devil said, grinning horribly. And he was right. It did; if only from the fact that it destroyed my ability to lift a bag for some weeks.

"But the broken fingers were clumsily set, and I found the work I tackled coming over very difficult in consequence. How came I to decide to come over? Well, my friend died. It was awfully sudden. A chill; double pneumonia; and she was gone. I could not bear to stay after that; and, really, I had rather talk no more about it. What of this finger business, can you arrange things for me at a hospital? I hope you can."

I was not anxious to facilitate his admission to the Army, and said so; telling him frankly that in my opinion he was not of the quality of which soldiers are made. I would put him in the way of getting the attention he required to set his

fingers right for hard work, and I would offer him to some civil employer should he care for me to do so, it being understood that he put the idea of enlistment out of his mind.

The hospitals were much too full for his admission as an in-patient to be thought of. He received the skilful attention he required, but it was necessary to provide him with board and lodging during the five weeks he received attention as an out-patient. With the small weekly sum it was requisite to add as pocket-money, Macdonald's cure cost me a total sum of four pounds, although the surgical attendance was free.

Probably the fact that he had rendered Macdonald excellent service gave the surgeon the impression that he possessed the right to urge his patient, as soon as he had full use of his fingers again, to enter the Army. Macdonald, of course, jumped at this excuse for breaking faith with me, presented himself at a recruiting office, and was accepted for the Royal Field Artillery. Then he called on me dressed in khaki, and apologised, throwing the blame on the doctor. No doubt the doctor felt that he had rendered patriotic service to his country in securing a recruit, but, considering that Macdonald was to repay the money I had spent on his behalf out of the substantial wages he could earn in civil employment I had secured for him at war-time rates, I felt that the doctor owed me four pounds.

For I had it on the evidence of two credible witnesses that Macdonald at first demurred to the doctor's suggestion, saying feebly, "Mr Holmes says I mustn't go;" and that the surgeon's reply was, "Blow Mr Holmes; you do what I tell you; go."

Well, he went, and there was no use in crying over spilt milk, even to the value of four hardly-earned pounds. Presently I heard from the Chap-

lain of his regiment during training in England. He chanced to be the same excellent man whose letter long before was responsible for certain futile arrangements on Macdonald's last release from a prison. He now told me that he had run across the man again, and how a miracle had been wrought in him through the instrumentality of a Scripture-reader who conducted evangelistic services in the camp.

> "Macdonald," he said, "has changed completely. I had always a soft place in my heart for the fellow, as you may have guessed; and you may be inclined to think that I am consequently exaggerating what has taken place. I assure you that that would be impossible. Every soldier talks of it. Macdonald for the first week of his conversion did nothing in his spare time but read the Bible and groan and pray, the Scripture-reader treating his case with a skill and delicacy which was most valuable (I gladly own it) as a lesson to me. Then, after a week's utter misery, light seemed to break: Macdonald exchanged mirth for mourning, pouring out his whole soul in singing continually. Now he is the Scripture-reader's right hand, spending every moment he can in his company, and giving valuable help in reaching and influencing the other men; and thus, with this excellent evangelist, tremendously assisting me in the work I try to do. I am so glad to be able to tell you this."

But for this pleasing letter from the Chaplain I should never have guessed what had transpired. The letters Macdonald sent might have struck me as restrained in style, but that is a feature to which I am accustomed. Only my most intimate acquaintance and friends exhibit that delightful freshness which comes of a feeling of freedom, to say just what is in the mind in confidence that it

will not be misunderstood, or regarded as impertinent. And Macdonald was never an intimate acquaintance. We never quite understood one another. It was left for the unnamed Scripture-reader to be his real friend.

Glancing through the half-dozen letters he wrote to me while training, there is really nothing in them worth quoting. They describe the common events of common days in a style of intense dulness. There is a suggestion of an attempt to live a different life, which I might have taken as meaning nothing at all save for the Chaplain's commentary thereon. When I mentioned in my own letters that I had heard with pleasure of the change in him, he only answered that he prayed and tried to be a better man. I liked him all the more for his lack of self-conceit, and had all the better hope of his continuing steadfast in the right way.

In November he wrote that he was on his way to Gallipoli, and incidentally thanked me for something I had written in 'My Police Court Friends,' a copy of which he had taken with him from England. Then came the letter I have quoted telling how Bombardier Buxton died. It was by far his most interesting letter, as it was his last. Following what he wrote of his friend are these words:—

> "I feel that God has been very merciful to me as to him. The war came to both of us as an opportunity of regeneration. Say what men will, war is not all evil. Had peace remained in the world, I doubt that no warning would have affected us. As we were, so we should have remained, going down the wrong road heedlessly till all was lost, body and soul."

Reading the casualty lists a month later my attention was arrested by the name of Driver

Angus Macdonald. It was my old acquaintance. How the end came I have not been able to ascertain. The Chaplain, Buxton's special friend, wrote to me simply:—

> "He knew you, and spoke most highly of you. I am sorry that I was down with dysentery when he was killed. But he was a good man—one who always did his duty without flinching. Now he is at rest."

VI.

PIONEER BRAND.

He regarded me with a special affection, sometimes embarrassing, for twelve years before the war. Whensoever discharged from prison during that period, I was the first person he used to call upon. Altogether he honoured me with forty-six of these first calls. From which it will be gathered that none of his offences were sufficiently grave to merit long imprisonment.

He was, in fact, more mischievous than wicked. Looking at his record of offences now, one realises that more than before. Drunkenness, "lodging out," breaches of the peace by indulging in fighting, or of bye-laws by crying goods for sale at times when he was not allowed to cry his wares: these form the foundation of the pile of convictions standing to the credit of Péter Brand.

I could never bring myself to regard him as a criminal. For one thing, the short, sturdy, active, happy fellow, with contented easy-going expression of countenance, did not look the part. For another thing, every one of the masters he had found in his experience of employers by the score had nothing but praise for his industry when he cared to apply himself to work.

Moreover, he was not one of those difficult persons who seemed tied to one job. He could turn his hand to all manner of callings: coal-

mining, hairdressing, newspaper selling, furnace stoking, watch and clock repairing, hawking fish or fruit on a barrow, or retailing milk from door to door,—anything would do.

An exception to the rule that a Jack-of-all-trades is master of none, he was tolerably clever at whatsoever he took a fancy to attempt, and a severe critic of incompetence in others. He had a special aversion to a mean person, and considerable contempt for such as could not rise early "without a knocker-up."

In this latter connection he wearied me with a tale of two countrymen, whom he alleged had been given employment at his own place of work during a busy time of trade.

"They paid a knocker-up sixpence between 'em," he said, "and it about killed 'em to part wi' that tanner. They chewed it over all the Saturday afternoon. 'It'll cost us six-and-twenty bob in a year—that's what a tanner a week 'll come to,' they said one to another; and they made themselves right badly thinking about it, till, as they were in t' town same night, they see'd a 'larum clock ticketed eight and a tanner.

"Now it so happened as t' clockmaker kept white mice, which he sold as well as clocks. These chaps see'd 'em in cages, but they didn't ask no questions; their minds were full of a 'larum as they fancied, and they bought it and carried it to their lodging.

"'We shan't want t' knocker-up any more,' they told t' landlady; 'tell him he needn't bother about us no longer.'

"They set t' 'larum for half-past five on t' Sunday morning, just to try it like, and it went off all right.

"But next morning they were in bed at eight, and t' landlady had to call 'em; t' clock hadn't gone off. It was stood at four. They ought to

have been at work at six; as it was, they'd all they could do to get there by nine, and were thankful they'd only lost a quarter.

"When they got back to their lodging at night they had their tea, and then they tried to find out what was amiss wi' t' clock. They were a goodish while fumbling about and making nought out. So at last they began to take it to pieces. When they'd shifted two or three wheels a white mouse rolled out on to t' table.

"They stared at it for a bit. They couldn't make it out at first. Then they thought on. 'It's no use, Bill,' one said to t' other; 'we needn't bother no more. It's all over. It'll never go again. T' engine-tenter 's dead.'

"So they started t' knocker-up afresh."

He had indeed all that contempt for persons who need calling in a morning, and all who are ignorant of mechanics, becoming one who finds it no trouble to rise early, and who picks up knowledge of machinery as naturally as most folk learn to talk. It was certainly neither idleness nor lack of ability which caused him to be frequently out of a situation. In his own opinion, the interference of police was responsible.

"They can't bear to see me in a job a week," he complained; "they have a regular bet on which can land me first. It was all over me as them two Irishmen gave their jobs up."

"What Irishmen?" I enquired.

"Why, don't you know, sir?" he replied in tones of feigned surprise, and kindly proceeded to inform me.

"There were two Irish chaps came and joined our police force. When they got a sovereign apiece and some silver for their first week's pay they were that overjoyed they about jumped up to t' sky. They wrote for all their relations in Ireland to come over here. 'Don't waste no time,'

they said; 'come on quick. T' streets here's paved wi' gold.'

"They thought they must do some'at to earn such fortunes, so they set about laying hold of anybody as they noticed tread on a banana skin and locked him up for being drunk; and same by anybody as they see'd having a friendly scrap, or as they heard crying two bunches of celery for a penny, they'd nab 'em for disturbing t' peace or else for breaking t' bye-laws.

"Well, one day they asked t' see t' Chief Constable. He were rare and fond on 'em: they got more cases than any other dozen pair o' men in t' force, so they'd no trouble to get to see him.

"'What can I do for you, my men?' he asked 'em, pleasant like.

"'Nought,' they said; 'we want to gie us notice in.'

"'Give your notice in; nonsense, men!' he said, as soon as he could open his mouth after he'd got over his surprise. 'Why, you're the smartest pair of officers in the force. You mustn't think of such a thing.'

"'But we're going,' they said.

"'Why, whatever for?' he wanted to know.

"'Shall we tell him, Moike?' one asked t' other.

"'Aye,' Moike said.

"'Well,' says Patsy, 'we're here three month now, an' we've had twenty drunks apiece ivery week, an' a hell of a lot of boys for fightin'. We've had Peter Brand foive toimes for drunk and twice for selling oranges. An' we've been reckonin' up, an' it's a divil of a lot o' money what's owing to us.

"'Ivery drunk as we take afore his Worship, it's twelve and six you'll have to pay, says he. An' it comes to a fortune in a week as us is making for this town.

"'So we've talked it over, Moike an' me, an' it's leavin' we're afther, it is.'

"'But what are you going to do?' asked t' chief. He wor a bit fond on 'em. They'd done him some good, and he wor willing to show a right sense of gratitude, like.

"'I'll do what I can to help you, if you care to tell me what sort of work you want when you've done here,' he said. 'I'm sorry to lose you. I think you're making a mistake. You're smart fellows. You're sure to get on in the force. Think it over. I won't take your notice now. Come again in a week, and if you still want to leave, all right. I'll give you a character, and help you all I can, anyhow.'

"They shook their heads at him. ''Tain't a bit o' good, sir,' Patsy said. 'It's leaving now we're afther, the minute you can let us off.'

"'But what are you going to do?' he asked 'em again.

"Pat looked at Moike. 'Shall we tell him, Moike?' says he.

"'Aye,' Moike says.

"'Well,' says Patsy, 'it's two-and-twenty pound a week we've made apiece in twelve and sixpences for drunks an' foive bobs for other things, an' it's three month we've been making it, an' all us boys has been paid is six-an'-twenty shillin' a week. Us wages is nivver riz a farthin'.

"'So it's on our own we're startin'. Oi shall try 'em, and Moike'll run 'em in.'"

The story left me unenlightened as to what it had to do with him. I said so, remarking that since he never paid any fines the ease with which money could be got from him had hardly excited the Irishmen's dreams of wealth.

"They're all alike, sir," he assured me; "them what's left are just a' bad. Anything to get a case till they see it's doing 'em no good. It's

young police as is always worst. They learn better in time. But young police are as thick as blackclocks wherever I stir about. I can't get along nohow for 'em. I'm getting fair ashamed of asking for fresh jobs, and I've no heart to do it either, for as soon as I get into one they'll have me out again."

He was wrong. It was the misuse of his accomplishments, not the excessive zeal of police, which was responsible for his grievances. He was a beautiful penman, and had remarkable eyesight. It pleased him to devote considerable time and skill to the mastery of the difficult art of writing the Lord's Prayer on a bit of paper the exact size of a threepenny-piece. Then he passed on to the similar feat of engrossing the Ten Commandments on a space capable of being covered by a florin.

It was doubtless pleasant to be the recipient of boundless flattery at sundry inns where he exhibited these products of genius, and he was treated to much ale also. But his generous instincts caused him to repay ale with ale, and he got himself locked up as drunk and disorderly about threescore times in consequence.

Another difficulty he had to face was created by the envy of unworthy mortals. Few were capable of emulating his skill in penmanship, but now and then those were found who were not unwilling to cast doubts upon the genuineness of his productions. Peter was no exception to the general rule that true artists are proud of their creations. It was small wonder that his resentment of cruel insinuations should land him into occasional fights with his detractors. The pity was that the police invariably seemed to lay hold of the injured party while letting the persecutor go free.

There is an end to any man's ability to pay

fines. Make them frequent enough and ruinous enough, and the end soon arrives, as it did in Peter's case. As a matter of fact, it came before he had paid half the fine imposed on his first appearance at Court, rendering futile the arrangement he had made with a kindly Magistrate to wipe off the twelve and six by weekly instalments of half-a-crown.

He had been warned at the time.

"Don't neglect it," the Magistrate had advised; "you may be reminded of it at an awkward time if you do. The police have a way of disturbing people in the night sometimes when fines are not paid."

And inasmuch as Peter forgot all about the thing after he had paid two instalments, it came to pass that six weeks later he was disturbed in bed and caused to get up and walk off to prison for seven days.

He returned to a wife who had scarcely missed him while away. One of the penalties of his genius was that it took him much out of her society. That led to her forming an attachment with another. Peter knew of it, but it did not trouble him greatly.

"She could have got me out" (of prison by paying the remainder of the fine), he told me carelessly; "but she doesn't think enough about me to bother since she picked up with Cockney Dick. Never mind, it won't matter in a hundred year."

As she went out to earn her own living, and there were no children, everything had tended towards deepening the separation at first induced by Peter's habits. Both spent their evenings as and where they pleased, seeing little of each other at home or elsewhere. When Cockney Dick took up his lodging at the house Peter protested mildly, and was told that he was free to depart if he did

not admire the arrangement. The alternative being inconvenient, he acquiesced in Dick's remaining.

"It doesn't matter a great deal to me," he said; "I aren't often in the house, you know."

The habits of the couple made home visitation so exceedingly difficult that I should have seen little of Peter had he not taken the fancy to pay me regular calls when at liberty.

I never did much for the fellow. As far as I can remember I twice provided him with working boots, and on five occasions risked money either to get him decently clothed or to enable him to buy perishable goods for hawking. He repaid me every penny I risked. There was one occasion when I thought the money had gone, though.

It was during a strawberry season. The market was glutted. Peter, just discharged from prison and out of employment, saw profit in the fruit trade. I lent him fifteen shillings for stock, the hire of a barrow and scales, and coppers for change. He started all right, taking his strawberries to an artisan suburb and disposing of half in a couple of hours. Then he counted his money. He had eighteen shillings and fourpence, exclusive of the change. He felt entitled to a little rest and refreshment.

Making the barrow secure, he entered an inn, purposing to indulge his appetite with moderation. Unfortunately, one of the customers already there chanced to know of his wonderful penmanship, and called on Peter for specimens. The upshot of that was that Peter lingered long in the house, being ultimately taken to the police station—barrow, strawberries, scales, and all.

It was a Saturday night when this transpired. Locked up until Monday morning, he had a sad complaint to make to the Court. The officiousness of the police had ruined him. His fruit was all spoilt, and he owed the price of it to a friend

whom he would not fall out with for worlds. The money found in his possession was his friend's, not his.

But the Court insisted that twelve and sixpence should be deducted from the fourteen shillings, which, including the change, was all that he had when arrested.

Poor Peter was involved in a tangle of misunderstandings. The interference of the police seemed preposterous to him, the consequent spoiling of his fruit rank injustice, the infliction of the fine wrong, and the enforced payment tyrannous.

He offered me the eighteenpence, but I told him to go to work at a pit, and tided him on till he drew his first week's wages, thirty-seven shillings and ninepence. Then he came like a man and paid me every penny he owed.

I had hoped that this was a beginning of better things, but I was soon disappointed. There was too much water in the pit, he said, and the roof was unsafe. He left that work to go about the district calling at houses seeking watches and clocks for repair, and a good many people grew anxious about their timepieces when he failed to return them according to promise. They were not reassured when enquiry revealed the fact that Peter was in prison, but there was no cause for alarm. It was the old trouble. He was not dishonest. He tried their patience, but their watches and clocks were returned at last thoroughly and skilfully repaired.

At a time of bad trade he went back to hawking, buying some celery very advantageously before the Saturday afternoon market closed. He delayed its sale until the Sunday, and forgot a bye-law which proscribes crying or ringing bells in the street on the Lord's Day in his anxiety to clear out his stock. He was summoned, but he had tired of hawking before the case came on for

hearing, and being at work as assistant to a hairdresser, risked the disapproval of the Bench at his failing to appear rather than offend his new employer by asking leave to attend Court.

At any rate that was the tale he told the Magistrate before whom he was presently brought, a warrant having been issued because of his disobeying the summons. The Magistrate was not keen about the administration of the particular bye-law under which Peter was charged. He thought that some allowance should be made for changed times.

When he had heard Peter's excuse for non-appearance earlier, he said with grave irony—

"You wanted to sell your celery, I suppose: and you got excited, and forgot all about the bye-law. It was natural, perhaps: but you mustn't do it. You are said to have rung a bell, as well as to have cried your goods. That was wrong. You aren't a tramcar, you know, or anything like that. You may be a convenience to the public when you're taking goods round; but you shouldn't ring a bell, and you shouldn't shout. What money have you got with you?"

"Half-a-crown, sir," Peter said.

"Very well; pay a shilling; and remember, you aren't a tramcar, so don't ring a bell any more."

"He's a toff," was Peter's opinion of that Magistrate. Peter was not a bad judge.

He enlisted without consulting me early in the war. I learnt the news from him when he sent me this letter:—

> "If you could only see me, sir; you'd laugh till you died. I do look a shoot for a soldier. You see, they haven't enough uniforms to go round, so I have to wear the clothes I 'listed in. They were shoddy things at the best of times. Now they're all to pieces. I've such dodging of them up as you never seed in

your life. We've no needles and no cotton. I have to do all my tailoring with bits of string and a knife, and any oddment of any sort in the way of a bit of cloth for patching. One trouser knee's brown corduroy, t'other's white; and there's a plaister of red flannel on my seat. Both coat-sleeves are tied in with string, and my waistcoat hasn't a single button left—it has to be stringed up and all.

"Lots of the chaps wear their shirt-tails outside their trousers; and many a dozen are in knickers, for the legs gave way at the knees, and it was less trouble to cut 'em off than try to mend 'em.

"It's grand weather, and we're having a high old time here. I'm glad I joined. It's made me eleven year younger. I was forty-six last July. Now I'm thirty-five."

Awhile later he wrote from Flanders:—

"It's funny, isn't it? When you're in a pit at home and working in water, you're grousing all along, though it's only for an eight hours' shift. The shift lasts a week here, and there's water up to your neck; your teeth chatter like knicker-nacks it's that cold; and you have to work your hardest if you only want to keep alive. And nobody grumbles. Officers laugh and joke with you, and hand out cigarettes as long as they've one left. You torment one another a bit, and you're as fussy as a dog with two tails to think you're doing your bit for your country."

He came out of the trenches for a rest in the summer of last year. Reaching home, he found his wife and Cockney Dick quite unappreciative of his generosity in placing no obstacle in the way of the separation allowance coming into that house, to be spent for their mutual benefit.

When he called on me I gave him a straight

talk on his folly in allowing such a wicked and foolish arrangement to continue. It was useless.

"It won't matter in a hundred year, sir," he said, as he had often said before; "I shan't bother. It doesn't do me a ha'porth o' harm. Besides, though I've come through without a scratch so far, they might give me a ticket for Kingdom Come any time. And I should like to start off there feeling as I'd done nought nasty to nobody, like."

He was ready to return when his leave expired, save that he was so drunk he had to be lifted into the train. He had signed the pledge in my presence the day before. So much for my influence over him when matched against the influence of even greater fools.

About the middle of November he wrote:—

> "Can you send me a pair of scissors, if you please? Nobody else will send me ought. It seems a shame to keep bothering you. I can't help myself, else I wouldn't torment you so much.
>
> "There's such a lot of us here with our hair nearly to our feet that it would be a real charity to help us. If I'd only a pair of scissors, I could do the rest. A fork would come in for a comb, but you can't very well cut hair with a knife. You might think, long hair being beautiful, it's a pity for us to lose it. But that's when hair's clean. Ours has been collecting the muck the Boches' shells chuck up for many a month. It's all matted, and about as pretty to look at as a Persian tom-cat's, when it's been raking out every night for a month and got the mange as well."

The scissors were provided. He made good use of them at once. It was well. For early in January he was blinded.

He dictated the few lines which told of the calamity—

> "No more fine writing for me; no more nought as wants eyes. I'm glad I'd cut all their hair afore that blasted shell came. It's fair sickening, though, to feel all right, only blind. I wouldn't have minded so much if they'd took my legs. They were never up to a deal. If I gave 'em ought to carry any time, ten to one they'd let me down. I could have spared them well enough. Still, we mustn't grudge our best for our country, must we, sir? It's a bit of comfort to feel you've given that."

Only yesterday a wounded comrade led Peter into my room. I received him with mingled feelings. Did he know that he had been abandoned in the day of his calamity by his wife, who had left the city with Cockney Dick? What was he to do for the future? Where would he make his home?

As I listened to his comrade's story of his popularity in his battalion, and of the act of heroism which had cost him his eyesight and nearly his life—picking up a lighted bomb and throwing it out of the way of working destruction among the men of his own company,—my grief grew the deeper for the ill reward he must receive. I hinted delicately at the true state of things he had come back to, and hurried to tell of an arrangement I had thought of which might meet his needs tolerably well. For the latter he was very grateful. Of the former he said not a word till he reached the door. Then he remarked in the old familiar tone—

"I'd heard about 'em 'opping it, Mr Holmes; well, let's hope they'll be happy. I don't know as it'll matter a deal to me in a hundred year."

VII.

TRIMMER ALFRED GIBBS.

THE common-lodging-house "deputy" was a diminutive hunchback, very frail, quite unfit for manual labour, but absolutely truthful, honest, and straightforward. It had been my good fortune to introduce him from the workhouse to the position. He had held it to the satisfaction of the lodging-house proprietor for two years when he came to me one day with a very long and very sad face.

His duties were generally to take charge of the lodging-house at nights. He was responsible for quelling disturbances among other equally unpleasant tasks. The method by which he maintained the peace gave evidence of his considerable acumen and ability. It consisted of so impressing the majority with the reasonableness of his demands that they invariably supported him in any step he saw fit to take. Consequently, notwithstanding his contemptible bodily presence and his obvious feebleness, he kept better order in the place than any of the comparative giants who had preceded him in the post of deputy for the last twenty years.

The lodgers were in the habit of depositing with him, for safe keeping in his little office, night by night such money and valuables as might chance to be in their possession. It was

reckoned far safer to place such goods in his custody than to retain them in their personal keeping. Strange birds flit in and out of common lodging-houses. They have been known to fly off with money or bits of jewellery taken from underneath pillows, or from lodgers' pockets while men slept.

Because of the deputy's methodical plan of cataloguing the various goods entrusted to his custody, and because the little cells he had made in sundry drawers for the safe keeping of these treasures answered well the purpose they were intended to serve, he enjoyed the high esteem and full confidence of all the lodgers for the greater part of the two years mentioned. Then began a series of losses which he could by no means understand or explain. He was in the habit of depositing the goods in the places allotted to them, one by one as they were received from their owners, and he remained in his office all night, save that he looked round the house twice or thrice at intervals, when a friendly policeman came along and took temporary charge of his little apartment. Yet money went: two shillings on a given Thursday night, five shillings on the Friday, ten on the Saturday, six on the Monday, and so on; something being missing every night for three weeks. Then came a six weeks' interval; nothing disappearing. It was held by the police, who had been consulted, that the offences were probably the work of one of four men who had ceased to be lodgers at the place, having been provided with suitable accommodation for lengthy periods in one of His Majesty's prisons.

Such was the deputy's opinion too. His spirits, naturally depressed by the evil fortune which had dogged him, began to revive with the return of brighter days. Exactly six weeks, however, saw the pilferings taking place once more. It was

very strange. He came along to see what I could make of it, and I had a talk with a detective officer after cheering the deputy as best I could.

Machinery was set in motion. Three nights later the culprit was caught red-handed. He was brought before the Court, and his guilt proved up to the hilt.

It was a disagreeable and a painful matter for the police force of this city, but no attempt was made at concealment. A young officer, who had not been a member of the force longer than nine months, was in the habit, when on night duty, of taking supper in the deputy's office, as was the custom of other constables on that beat, and the deputy was wont to leave him in charge while going his rounds with that sense of security which the protection of an officer of the law inspired.

Shamefully betraying his trust, that young officer took advantage of the opportunity afforded for thieving while the deputy's back was turned. Careless of the injury he risked doing that innocent man, he purloined money night by night for three weeks, and listened to the deputy's plaintive tales of robbery with pretended anger and scorn against the thief, whom he declared himself determined to discover and bring to justice, acting his miserable part so well that when his first turn of night duty expired he was not suspected of the smallest part in the robberies.

It was the fact that the recurrence of thefts coincided with his resuming night duty which caused suspicion to fall upon him. A trap was set. He was seen by a police-sergeant, watching through a window unobserved, when the deputy had left him alone in the office, to go to a drawer, examine various cells, abstract and place in his pocket all the money he could find, then

sit down and continue his supper, greeting the deputy with a joke and a laugh on his return from his round.

The sergeant and an inspector intervened at this. Laying hold of their unworthy colleague they ordered him to empty his pockets. Three marked shillings were found in his possession. He realised that it was useless to attempt denial. Instead, he begged his superior officer to forgive him for the sake of his wife and two young children, and the kind-hearted deputy added his plea that the wretch might be given another chance. All was in vain. Less rather than more consideration was given this thief than would have been shown the most notorious. It was rightly held that only publicity could purge the force of the disgraceful suspicion his wrong-doing had brought upon it.

The magistrate who heard the case said impressively as he passed sentence of three months' hard labour—

"Alfred Gibbs, it is very painful to see a member of the police force of this city occupying the position you occupy. You have committed a whole series of offences. You could not have obtained admission to this force without a character. You have broken faith with whoever gave you that character. You know that as a constable you were trusted; that was why the poor lodging-house deputy left you in charge; yet you did not hesitate to break faith with this man, and to bring disgrace upon the whole police force of the city. You knew the chances were that unfortunate men, down on their luck, and for that reason in the lodging-house, would be suspected of the crimes you committed, and that encouraged you, coward-like, to go on in your evil way. You had no compassion, and no sense of shame; but must take from the very men upon whom you threw

suspicion, such poor earnings as they had managed to scrape together.

"Then you come whining for mercy and another chance. It cannot be. The least I can do is to sentence you to the imprisonment you thoroughly deserve. Think over what you have done. Make up your mind to be a man, and begin again in a decent way of living when you come back."

Gibbs, a tall dark man about six-and-twenty years old, had given signs of emotion during the hearing of the case, and now reeled from the dock, weeping bitterly, as persons of his unmanly type so easily can do. I was more concerned with his young wife, who had occupied a seat in the Court, and was now leaving. Following her, I made enquiries as to how she proposed maintaining herself during her husband's imprisonment.

She was a tiny, fragile-looking woman, with a pale intelligent face, drawn and sad, but stamped with the unmistakable seal of goodness. She was not weeping. Indeed, her attitude struck me at first sight as harsh.

"If I could get laundry-work," she replied to my enquiry, "I could manage very well; I'm a good laundress, and I'm used to hard work. If you know any lady who will employ me, I'm sure I shall please her."

It was impossible to doubt that she would try; but it seemed unlikely that her strength would bear the stress of a hard day's laundry work. I hinted my fears as delicately as I could; but she insisted that she was able to do the work she asked for. She had been used to heavy toil, she told me, all her life.

"All her life:" she was three-and-twenty years old. But what tragic experiences were crowded into that little space of time!

As a child of nine she had first seen the inside of a Court of Justice, being put to the necessary

pain of telling first a magistrate and next a judge a most shocking story of her sufferings, that the horrible depravity of her unnatural step-father might be punished. Then she went to the home of an uncle, who, when she was barely fourteen, repeated the conduct her step-father was guilty of, and paid a similar penalty. This time the grievously wronged child went from the Court to a training institution, from which she proceeded, after two years' ceaseless drudgery, to a situation as third laundry-maid in a large private household. Here she had a kind mistress, but, unfortunately, saw little of her, being under the direction of a head laundry-maid of a peculiarly hateful type of character. This person having learnt something of the child's sad history, set herself to extract from the poor girl the most sordid details. These she whispered among her fellow-servants, who in turn vexed the child with foolish and indelicate questions. Presently she found herself shunned, and became aware that she was being talked about. She grew morose, and, while working hard, went about her duties with a lack of vivacity, and laid herself open to false charges of slothfulness.

"I can't tell you, sir," she said to me, as she recounted her story, "what I endured at that place. After petting me for a week or two, and getting everything out of me, the head laundry-maid turned against me, and never lost a chance of saying something to hurt me.

"'I'm sick to death of workhouse brats,' she would say, many a time a day, though she knew I hadn't come from a workhouse; it was just to say something cruel: 'I think it's a real shame that respectable folk should have to mix with such like. If this one stops, I shall go. I shall tell the missis what I think about it: there isn't room here for our sort and hers as well.'

"So I stayed a year to earn a character, you know, sir, and then I handed my notice in. My mistress sent for me. She was very kind, and I made a mistake in not telling her the truth when I had the chance.

"'So you're going to leave me, Martha,' she said, and the tears came into my eyes as I heard her speak; it was so different from anything I was used to; 'I am sorry you've decided to go: Ellen (that was the head laundry-maid) always said how nicely you managed.'

"Of course I know now that I ought to have said I was surprised to hear that Ellen said anything of the sort; but at the time my breath was taken away, and I never spoke a word. So the mistress looked at me sadly. I daresay she thought me stupid and ungrateful. Anyhow she went on: 'I hope you will get a good situation. I shall give you an excellent character. I suppose you wish to get a little more money, or perhaps a little more experience—which?'

"More experience, ma'am," I said, hardly knowing what I was saying.

"'Well,' the mistress replied, 'I don't think you are to be blamed for that.' And so I left that place."

She got another situation, and this time held her tongue about her past. All went smoothly for eighteen months. Then the second housemaid left, and her place was taken by a girl who had been third housemaid in the family where Martha was employed for a year. The two girls met and instantly recognised one another. Before a week had passed everybody in the servants' hall knew every sordid detail of Martha's life, and instead of the intense pity which alone should have been awakened thereat, ignorant cruel scorn and contempt was bestowed upon her.

"I wondered whether to make a hole in the

water, or to try another place when I left there at the end of two years," she told me—and what wonder had she yielded to temptation to drown herself?

As it was, she took a third situation, being a little over nineteen years old. Her post here was that of second laundry-maid, and she experienced exceptional kindness at the hands of the motherly woman set over her. Perhaps this good creature's supervision was a little lax. Still the blame for what followed must go where it is justly due.

Undoubtedly the young footman there had guilty intentions when he began to pay court to Martha. That he never loved her is quite certain. She, poor girl, her parched heart thirsting for affection, was only too ready to believe his promises and accept his embraces.

The discovery of their illicit love was made about the time that a daughter of their master and mistress was to be married. With great charity and good-sense a decision was arrived at which might advantageously be copied in like cases when at all possible.

After soundly rating Gibbs for the brutish and disgraceful way he had treated the girl, his master enquired whether he was willing to marry her. Gibbs answered that he was. He was then told that while their service there must of course terminate, he could, if he pleased, have a situation as single-handed butler in the new household being formed as a result of the marriage of the daughter of his present employers, Martha undertaking light laundry-work. Gibbs accepted the offer with reluctance, Martha with alacrity.

They were duly married. Three months later Martha put her child out to nurse and joined her husband in the new situation. She did well. As for him, no longer under a superior servant, he grew insufferably lazy. He discharged his duties

in a slovenly fashion, had often to be reproved, and becoming impertinent was dismissed. He was then twenty-five years old, being three years his wife's senior. His discharge necessitated hers. Not knowing what to do, she wrote to a friend whose husband, once himself a footman, had become a member of a police force, and who recommended Gibbs to follow his example. Whether this officer felt that Gibbs would do no credit to the force he himself belonged to is uncertain. He recommended him to apply for admission elsewhere, and he applied to the watch committee of this city.

The difficulty as to character was overcome by referring to an old employer who was unaware of the disgrace Gibbs had brought upon himself during recent years, and the fellow became a constable. Although his wife's wit had put him in the way of earning a livelihood when his ordinary employment failed, the best reward he paid her was to keep back the major portion of his wages. A second child was born, and the midwife who attended the mother gave the brute a taste of her biting tongue which brought him to reason for as long as her visits continued. Then he grew more selfish and neglectful. When the poor wife, her two babies crying for nourishment, remonstrated with him because he only provided an average weekly sum of twelve shillings for the entire upkeep of the home, he beat her with a heavy leathern belt, and that more than once.

"He's belted me till I am black and blue all over," the poor ill-used woman told me, indicating that he had need of improvement, when I expressed the hope that serving the sentence of imprisonment would effect a change in him.

Since after the manner of his kind, he had demanded the best of food, although what he gave his wife of his earnings was scarcely what he

would pay elsewhere for board and lodging for himself alone, the wife for all her thrift had found it impossible to keep out of debt. Money was owing both for rent and food. If she could only manage laundry-work it would not be difficult for her to maintain herself and her babies in more satisfactory fashion than was the case before her husband was sentenced. That was plain. I did not bargain for the brave little woman doing vastly better than that with her earnings at the places it was easy to introduce her to. But she did.

When I called at the beautifully tidy cottage containing just two apartments, a small sitting-room and a bedroom, at the expiration of three months, having made arrangements for her husband's employment on discharge from prison, she was able to show me a rent-book without arrears, and a series of grocery bills all paid off.

"I shall never forget your kindness," she said; "you see, sir, what you did in getting those places for me has made us that we don't owe a penny anywhere."

What I had done had been merely to name her to a few ladies who had found her an exceedingly capable laundry-woman, and who gladly paid her the good wages her efficient work deserved. I was delighted that her strength had stood the heavy test imposed upon it. But I was anxious about the future. I could not help feeling that she ought not to continue working a day longer than was necessary.

Pointing out that a situation as labourer at a steel manufactory awaited her husband's return, I informed her that I purposed telling him that he would be expected to maintain the babies and herself with his own earnings as soon as he was paid his first week's wages. "Go on till the end of next week, if you like," I advised her; "but

don't go on any longer. If he is not taught as soon as possible to himself earn the living for you all, I'm afraid he'll get into the way of depending upon you too much."

"Yes," she replied, "I know that; I'll keep my places on till he's made a fair start, and till I've got a few clothes for the children. Then I'll give them up."

Although this arrangement postponed by a few weeks the date I had thought of as most suitable for her discontinuing the laundry-work, I agreed. The children were both in the room, the two-year-old, chubby, merry little girl playing with a kitten on the hearth-rug, and the bonny, plump baby boy of nine months asleep at his mother's breast. Both had been brought on the mother's return from work just before my call by the kind-hearted neighbour who looked after them for no reward save that which comes of loving deeds done out of the overflowing kindness of a generous heart. There was no arguing that the babies had suffered from the fact that the mother left them day by day to engage in her heavy toil, and the neighbour did not share my fears lest the mother's strength should fail. She thought with me that it would be well to discontinue the laundry-work as soon as possible, but only because she regarded Gibbs as likely to take it for granted that his wife should always go out working if she went on too long after his return.

Therefore when I called on him the following night, having given his wife an opportunity of seeing him alone for a while before I intruded, I told him he ought to regard himself fortunate indeed in possessing such a wife, and that not one man in a thousand returns from imprisonment under conditions so entirely favourable. I pointed out that I expected him to start working as a labourer at six o'clock next morning in a situation

which I had secured for him. His wife would continue to do laundry-work for a month, just to secure maintenance for the family until he drew wages, and to provide clothing for the children. Then he must take the whole burden of his family's support upon his own shoulders.

He professed to be much gratified to find things so satisfactory, and made a great deal of the concern he declared he had felt as to the wellbeing of his family while he was in prison.

"I'll turn up on the stroke of six in the morning at the work you've been so kind as to get me, sir," he said: and I thought he was really grateful for the offered chance. That was on a Monday night. About ten o'clock on the following Wednesday morning I enquired at the place where work had been promised him how he was getting on. The reply startled me: "He's never been near."

I made haste to his house. The blinds were drawn. No answer was returned to my knock. A woman came to the next door and pointed me to a house where, she said, I should be told anything I desired to know concerning the family.

I went to the house indicated. The door was opened by that kindly neighbour whom I knew as having so generously tended the children already, and in whose care I once more found them. She bade me enter, closing the door softly after me,

"Isn't it sad, sir," she said, beginning to cry.

I realised that some tragedy had occurred, and sat down to listen to one of the most moving stories I ever heard. A few details were filled in later, but what I then heard was substantially this:—

Gibbs showed reluctance to rise when the alarum, carefully set by his wife, went off at

five o'clock on the previous morning—the morning upon which he was to have taken up the situation I had procured for him. His wife, who had already risen, insisted; and at last he got out of bed grumbling. She made a cup of tea. He drank it, then took up the basket in which she had packed his meals for the day, and started off seemingly better tempered.

Rapidly making the house clean and tidy, his wife next bathed and dressed her babies, gave them food, locked up the house, and handing the key to the neighbour, kissed her little ones, and went to her own work.

She was wonderfully bright that day, her mistress said: it was pleasant to hear her singing over her ironing, hour by hour, and she finished all her duties quite early. When she was complimented upon her smartness, she replied with a sweet smile: "You know what they say, ma'am—'A merry heart makes light work.'"

She was still smiling when she called at the neighbour's for the door-key, but her smile faded when told that her husband had fetched it away about nine o'clock in the morning. She went to her home. The neighbour accompanied her, with the children. They found Gibbs sitting before a huge fire smoking his pipe.

"Haven't you been at work?" his wife asked anxiously.

"No," he grunted; "I haven't."

"Why?" she exclaimed.

"I wasn't fit," he growled surlily; "I was right ill. I had to hurry back home, sharp."

She was too faint to go on with the argument. She sat down and mechanically unbuttoned her blouse to give her baby suck. The neighbour noticed what she was about to do.

"Let me have the children a bit longer," she

said. "They're not hungry; they were fed only an hour ago. I'll take them back while you make yourself a drop of tea. *You're* not very well, anyhow."

She took them away, returning an hour later, at about seven o'clock. Instantly the mother took the younger child, undressed it, prepared it for bed, and put it to the breast.

It was soon asleep. She rose and staggered across the room to the stairs. The baby was heavy, and she was very weary. She groped her way upstairs, taking the little one to rest.

The father dozed in his chair. Tired of playing with the kitten, the other child, the little girl, fell asleep on the hearth-rug. The fire burned low. Half-awakened by a feeling of chilliness, the infant woke her father by beginning to whimper. He looked round for his wife, and seeing that the door leading upstairs was open, called for her. There was no reply. He called louder; still no response came.

The friendly neighbour, uneasy, she could not explain why, opened the door at this moment. "Is she all right?" she asked of the husband.

"I don't know," he answered, looking a little alarmed; "she's upstairs, I think."

Lighting a candle, the woman climbed the stairs and entered the bedroom. In the bed lay the baby, sleeping sweetly. On the floor, her head pillowed at the child's feet, one arm extended as in protection above its head, the other resting on the bedside, the mother knelt, quite dead!

The coroner's jury decided in accordance with the medical evidence, that "heart failure" was the cause of death. No doubt they were right. I should put it that she died of a broken heart, much the same thing. It had been too much for her to discover that for all his punishment and her hopes and labours, her husband re-

mained the selfish, cowardly person he had ever been.

His way of going on had made it impossible for his wife to secure that provision usually made nowadays by even the poorer working folk so that funeral expenses may be met. Poor creature! it had been a hard enough struggle to procure food. There was nothing left for insurance premiums. It seemed that she must be placed in a pauper's grave.

"Well," says the moralist, "what harm would that do?"

I cannot answer him, but I do not mind for that. To my unspeakable joy it was found possible to easily obtain a sufficient sum to lay the heroine to rest in a manner befitting one who had proved herself to be of the noblest and bravest.

The husband was not present at the interment. It was believed that he was really ill. His old parents came from their home in the west country. As soon as they saw him, they bade him take care of himself; he looked "so much out of sorts," they said.

They stayed the night. In the morning it was found that he had gone, leaving a note in which he committed his helpless babies to their care, saying that he could stay no longer to bear the finger of scorn which people were pointing at him. He would write again presently, and send money for the children's support.

So he slid out of his responsibilities; and his aged parents departed to their distant village burdened with the grandchildren to whose maintenance, it is hardly necessary to say, he never contributed a penny. His father died three years later, and before his mother entered an almshouse the orphan boy and girl were received into Dr Barnardo's big family to be happy there.

Twelve more years passed. A tall, unwashed, unshaven, ragged ruffian called on me one wet winter night, coughing and wheezing as he begged for the price of a bed in a lodging-house. I pulled a handful of silver from my pocket and deliberately fumbled among the coins, keeping my gaze fixed upon him the while. His eyes sparkled, his coughing and wheezing stopped. The cure had been wrought by the fancy that what the ailments were adopted for had been gained. I put the silver back in my pocket. His face fell.

"You are not a good actor," I said; "and you are good for nothing else. I can do the part you have done far better than you;" and I coughed and wheezed and begged at least as convincingly as he had.

He glared at me savagely, and muttered that I was "a dog." He would have struck me had he dared.

"There," I went on, "clear out; go to the workhouse. You won't get a penny from me."

He hesitated: I repeated my demands in a peremptory tone, and stepped forward to assist him away. He grasped each knob of the open door with both hands.

"Wait a minute," he pleaded; "you don't know who I am. Help me for my wife's sake. You were fond enough of her. I'm Gibbs — ex-P.C. Gibbs,—you remember me, don't you, sir? My wife was found dead when she'd took the baby to bed that night."

I was struck dumb by the fellow's impudence. "What," I exclaimed at last, "you have the audacity to tell me that! Now, certainly you will clear out! Come!"

I took him by the coat-collar and wrenched him from his hold on the door. When we reached the top of the stairs leading to my office, I asked him whether I was to be put to the trouble of throw-

ing him down, or whether he would go away quietly without that.

He burst into tears. "I didn't mean no harm," he blubbered; "you was good to my wife; and you might give me another chance. I've never troubled you before, and you're paid to help such as me, aren't you?"

He was a fool, or he would never have put his foot in it so hopelessly, not being drunk, and seeking a favour. We got down the stairs, and I shut the street door against him.

When I left for home he was waiting there to resume begging. I repeated that he must go to the workhouse; and I went my way.

In the morning I found him at the Court, charged with vagrancy. He was remanded for a day, to afford the police opportunity for ascertaining whether there was justification for a slight suspicion they entertained that he was the person wanted in connection with a burglary in a neighbouring town. He was not. His record included many convictions for drunkenness, disorderly conduct as a pauper, and petty larcenies, but, as a detective remarked, he had not "the pluck for a burglary."

He was discharged from custody to seek me out again. As it was then midday, the afternoon remained for him to apply himself to earning a little money towards his own support. I gave him a job getting in coals. He worked well, and was enabled to obtain food and a bed with his wages.

Next morning, July 28, 1914, I saw a skipper on his behalf. I told all I knew of the man, yet the skipper took him for a trial voyage as a trimmer. Within a fortnight he deserted the ship at a port in Spain. I heard no more of him for half a year.

Then he called on me with a long rigmarole of lies, unwashed, unshaven, ragged, as before. I

turned him away, and thought I had done with him for ever.

But after a month he was at me again, begging for a final chance. Men were urgently wanted everywhere, but not, I thought, curs like him. I told him very plainly what was in my mind. He listened patiently this time. Then he said—

"Risk me once more. Give me a second-hand suit and pair of boots, a collar and tie, and the price of a shave, and let me feel a man again. If I don't do then I'll never trouble you any more as long as I live."

There was something in what he said; not much, possibly, but enough to make me do what he asked. He went again to sea in the same capacity as before. Three months later I heard that he still served on the same ship, a small vessel engaged in the Norwegian trade.

In June 1915 he made his last voyage, the ship being torpedoed by a German submarine, and sinking in a few minutes. The skipper, who escaped with seven out of a crew of eleven, told me this concerning Gibbs:—

"That fellow you got me to take last February, he was not such a bad sort after all. When we sighted the submarine he said, 'Never mind me; I don't count much: I'll go and get as much out of the boilers as they'll do. Don't bother about me if we're hit; you look after yourselves;' and he went at the firing like a man.

"I called out for him to come up when the bang was over, but he was badly scalded, and when we went to help him, we could not get him from under some boiler-plates that crushed him down. 'Leave me,' he cried; 'can't you see she's sinking? She won't be afloat two minutes longer. You can't do me any good.'

"We had another go at the plates, but they wouldn't budge, and the boat was going fast, so we had to take him at his word, though it went sadly against the grain. We told him we were sorry to leave him, but he said, 'Oh, never mind; it can't be helped.' That was all. We were forced to scramble for the boat then."

They had already stayed dangerously long, their boat being all but taken down in the whirl of the sinking ship.

VIII.

CORPORAL JOSEPH SIMMS.

A GREAT many men of my acquaintance are what they term "put on." They resent it, and sometimes their resentment takes a violent form. Then they are extremely likely to appear in a police court.

I do not mean to suggest that these men differ from other mortals in the fact that they resent being "put on." Most folk do. It is in what they consider as constituting being "put on" that the difference comes.

Where several men are engaged, every one in charge of a horse and cart, to remove rubbish excavated in preparing foundations for buildings, so long as all are required to fill and cart away an equal number of equally heavy loads, there would seem at first sight to be no possibility of a quarrel as to favouritism. But first impressions are not always reliable.

Asked by his foreman why he had idled a couple of hours away, his horse and cart standing with him unemployed beside a big heap of stones and dirt which he was supposed to be assisting to remove, Joseph Simms, carter, pointed an accusing finger after a more favoured rival who was going away with a second load, whereas he himself had not yet begun to fill a first.

"Why haven't I started?" he replied. "I'm not

goin' to start till I get fairation. You're not going to do what you like wi' me, you know. What's he more'n me? How is it as he can tak' all t' muck an' I mun tak' all t' stoanes?"

The stones being large, were heavier than the quantity of "muck" a carter's shovel would hold. To load them meant greater exertion on the carter's part. It also meant more speedily discharging what was required of him, and more time to rest from toil between loads. The foreman was obsessed with the latter fact, and thought it completely compensated for the former. Joseph did not agree. He regarded his brethren as bent upon putting him in a hole. But he was not the patriarch of that name. He would have neither hole nor house of bondage.

"Take your coat off, you lazy skulk," the foreman urged in reply to his protests; "take your coat off and get to work, or else get to the office and draw your back pay."

"Is he going to tak' his turn wi' t' stoanes?"

"He's going to do what I tell him, same as you."

"Well, I'm not starting till he's took his whack, that's all."

He took a short clay pipe from his pocket, deliberately cleaned it out with his knife, and put it in his mouth. Then he produced a small square of tobacco, cut a few shreds, leaned against the cart-shafts, rubbed the shreds, removed the pipe from his mouth, filled and lighted it, and began to smoke, ignoring the foreman's caution given as he walked away—

"Make your mind up soon what you're going to do. You're not t' gaffer here; I'm him."

A third carter came up and began to tackle the stones. Joseph remonstrated.

"Don't be such a fool," he said; "let him tak' his share?"

"Who?"

"Owd Billy."

"I'm not going to bother; what's it matter?"

"Why, what right has he got to make us tak' all t' stoanes and let him tak' t' muck."

"I didn't know as he did."

"Ah, but I did, though. I'm not asleep. An' if I hadn't been here watching you, you'd a took muck an' all."

"Should I? Well, happen I should; you go to——"

Heedless where Joseph went, even after suggesting a destination, that carter filled his own load of stones and started away, making room for a fourth, who did likewise, in spite of Joseph's advice and rebukes.

The chief offender returned.

"Aren't you starting to-day, Joe?" he enquired mildly, as he got his shovel from the cart in preparation for loading dirt.

"No, not if you're going on wi' muck, I aren't. I like fairation. Why should you tak' all t' muck an' us all t' stoanes?"

"I don't know; ask t' gaffer," this carter advised, and turned from Joseph to rapidly throw dirt into the cart.

The foreman returned.

"You're not starting then?" he said to Joseph.

"Not on stoanes," Joseph replied.

"All right; leave your horse and cart, and off it."

He whistled. Another man came up.

"Here you are," the foreman continued, addressing the newcomer, "fill a load of these stoanes and go wi' this chap (the carter with the dirt). You stick to stoanes, and leave him t' muck. Then you'll know what you're adoing on."

"Don't you be soft enough, mate," Joseph advised; "don't let 'em mug you. You're a fool if you do."

But his advice was ignored. There was nothing

for it but to go to the office and draw such wages as were due to him.

His mother being out doing washing and his father and sister at work, he had a further grievance when he reached his closed home an hour later. He sought comfort in an inn, where he consumed many pints of beer while meditating revenge on the foreman, whom he imagined had done him an injustice.

In the morning he appeared in Court on a grave charge. He had lain in wait for his enemy and surprised him with a blow from a shovel, which struck the man on the head, seriously injuring the skull. A remand was taken, the injured man being in hospital in a critical condition. Fortunately he recovered quickly, and the case was proceeded with in time for reference to Quarter Sessions, which opened a month later.

There was, of course, no defence. Joseph went to prison for three months—a most lenient sentence, for which he had largely to thank the generosity of the man whom he had so wantonly and cowardly attacked, the foreman telling the Court that he regarded the assault more as the work of the drink that Joseph had consumed than as anything else, which was true.

He came to me on release. I had visited his parents while he was in prison, and I had a good deal to say to him about the manner in which he had hitherto been wont to behave at home.

"My advice is," I concluded, "turn over a new leaf; leave off sulking at trifles; keep your temper; act with a bit of sense."

He was about twenty-four years old, strong, well built, dressed in serviceable-looking working clothes, which showed signs of careful repair here and there, but his face wore an expression of chronic discontent.

"I will do if they'll let me alone," he answered in

a surly tone; "but what can a man do if everybody puts on him?

"It doesn't matter at our house now what our Clara does; it's all reight; she's t' white hen; she can't do nought wrong; she addles [earns] about seven bob a week, an' she spends about six in feathers an' flowers an' silk dresses an' what not, an' it's all reight.

"If I happen to lose a bit o' time now through bad weather or aught, an' take a bob or two short home, t' fat's in t' fire. I've been idlin' my time and boozing my money away, they say.

"And same at work. If there's aught as nobody else wants to do it's 'Gie it owd Joe: mak' him do it'; and they pick all t' soft jobs out till it's fair sickenin'."

He went away, still nursing his grievances. I had little hope that he would make much of the opportunity I offered him as carter for another employer. There were no stones to vex his soul at that place, and he had no rivals to pick out all the soft jobs, being the only carter employed, so there was just an off-chance to make the effort worth while.

Divers customers of his new employer complained frequently of Joseph's surly manner and of his idle habits. His master bore with him patiently for two years, seeking to teach him the advantages of a genial personality and of a reputation for industry. To that end he mentioned now and then some of the complaints he received of his manner and conduct.

"It's them what's wrong," Joseph retorted on more than one occasion; "why don't they look at theirselves? I reckon they think as workin' folks's nought, only for sich as them to walk on. If I can't do t' work to suit 'em, let 'em have a go at it theirselves; I'm willing! They mustn't think as they're going to humbug me."

It was good-natured, but scarcely wise, of this master to keep Joseph as long as he did, for he lost customers thereby and did Joseph no good. The end came when an irate mother justly complained very vigorously of his conduct towards her two children, mites, one of five, the other of three years old.

He was carting sand for certain building work in progress at the house. The children, delighted at an opportunity of playing seaside games at home, revelled in the pastime of making sand-castles out of the first few loads. Masons and their labourers went on with their work all the more cheerfully for the sounds of childish merriment. But when Joseph came with another cartful of sand he felt himself an injured person, because the once tidy heap he had piled up was now for the most part a ruin supposed to represent a castle moat. His face, never pleasant, clouded ominously.

"What are you doing on?" he asked the children, so savagely as to frighten them out of power to reply. "What game do you call this? Who gave you leave to meddle wi' this 'ere sand?"

"Let 'em alone, thou great crack-pot," a stonemason counselled; "they're doing thee no harm. Let 'em a-be; let 'em enjoy theirselves while they're young."

"Ah," Joseph replied, "I should think so. An' our gaffer'll come soon, an' he'll kick up a fine shindy about all t' sand being wasted. It'll be me as'll catch it, not thee; so shut up, and mind thi own business."

He turned to storm at the children, but they had fled. As he went for more sand, after completely destroying the seaside architecture in pretence of tidying up, he caught a glimpse of two frightened faces hiding behind the curtains of a window.

The moment he seemed out of the way the children returned, and, encouraged by the other workmen, resumed their game. But he had forgotten a shovel, and turned back. Seeing the little ones as he picked up the shovel, he ran towards them, brandishing it threateningly.

They were terrified, but managed to escape into the house, where they stayed for the rest of the day, their mother quite unable to make them face "that nasty man again."

The workmen gave Joseph a piece of their unanimous mind. The master added his opinion to his men's when the mother gave information about what had occurred.

"It's all right blamin' me," was the miserable defence Joseph addressed to his master; "but if you'd a come and found that there sand all litterin' an' wastin' about, you'd a got on to me nicely. It'd a been no use me blamin' it on to t' children. You'd a said, What did you let 'em for? Just 'cos I try and do mi duty, there's all this to do."

"Don't talk like a fool," his master urged. "What need was there to threaten the little things with the shovel? You might have frightened them into fits."

"They shouldn't a made faces at me, then," was the idiotic answer, evidently referring to the poor terrified little mites at the window. He was hopeless. His master parted with him. He went to a colliery where no children were, and it was months before I heard of him again, when he sought me out, seeking employment once more.

"Aye," he answered in response to my question why he left his last place, "why did I leave? I can tell you that easy enough: 'cos it's no good anybody tryin' to please them gaffers there—that's why. They all reckon to be religious, that lot. You mustn't gi' 'em any cheek if they jump on you, an'

you mustn't swear if they work you till you're dead. You've got to join t' Young Men's Christian Association an' go to church, or else chapel, once a Sunday. If you're known to sup aught stronger nor ginger-beer, there's t' sack for you. An' work! It's no use any man goin' there without he loves the Lord and can lift a couple o' ton. That's about it."

Joseph not having demonstrated any special piety, and his lifting capacity never having been tested beyond half a hundredweight—he saw to that,—his failure was profound.

It happened that I was unable to secure a more suitable place for him, and he idled about for two months, then his parents, weary of maintaining him, turned him out,

"It's all our Clara's fault," he complained. "She's gettin' married, an' her an' her chap's goin' to live wi' t' owd folks; so there's no room for me. I'm naught, of course. I can go anywhere—to t' workhouse, I reckon."

I reckoned so too; and saw no occasion for postponing his entrance there, as I well knew he had come in the hope that I should.

"You're not goin' to see me wi'out a bed, are you, Mister Holmes?" he asked incredulously, when he realised where my mind was drifting.

It was a stupid sort of question. I was actually putting him into the way of getting a bed, and of feeling that he was independent of charity at the same time. He was much too able-bodied a person for me to dream of encouraging into the way of accepting doles for procuring nightly shelter in lodging-houses. I made it quite clear that in my judgment the accommodation provided at the workhouse would meet his case admirably.

He left me, disgusted and disappointed. Naturally he failed to profit by advice so unwelcome. A week later he appeared before the Bench on

a charge of vagrancy. He was no stranger to the Court. Besides the conviction for assault, there were twenty-two for drunkenness. When asked if he had anything to say, he looked towards where I sat, waved his hand impressively, and exclaimed—

"He's the chap as you want to talk to; him as reckons to help folks when they're down on their luck, like. What did he do for me last time I axed him for aught? 'Go t' workhouse,' he said: to a man like me an' all! Wor I likely to go? Not me; no fear! Not while I can crawl about outside: I'd starve in t' gutter first. It's him what's made me go and sleep out o' doors. He should a stood me my lodgings, then I shouldn't a been here. Ax him, if you can't believe what I say."

The magistrates evidently accepted his story. Without consulting me, they provided him with fourteen days' board and lodging at an institution to which they have the right to send people. Their kindness so astonished Joseph that for a few seconds he was too astonished to speak. He managed to open his mouth for a parting shot at me only as the officers forcibly moved him from the dock—

"I shall waste mi time going to see that feller again, I don't think," he grumbled; "tellin' such like as me to go t' workhouse; he ought to be there hisself. He wants shootin'."

Joseph really preferred prison to workhouse. His preference was no novelty. Many had already expressed the same to me. The exact reason why prison is considered as a less disgraceful place of residence than a workhouse may be worth while looking into from the inmates' point of view some day.

Coming back when the fourteen days were expired, Joseph got a living somehow for a week

before being arrested and commited to Quarter Sessions on a charge of stealing a topcoat.

According to the evidence, the topcoat was seen hanging above the heads of passers-by outside a clothier's premises about dusk on the evening of a certain day in November. Joseph was observed to approach the coat from the entry of a neighbouring court, snatch it down, throw it over his arm, and walk away.

The attention of a constable was called to the affair, Joseph's retreating figure being still visible in the distance.

The constable gave chase. Joseph, hearing feet hurrying behind him, increased his speed. Yet the chase went against him. He got rid of weight by throwing the coat away; but his sacrifice was vain. The constable seized him, returned and picked up the coat, and bore away both it and Joseph in triumph.

Caught red-handed in that fashion there seemed little for Joseph to say. It had not entered my mind that possibly he was labouring under another grievance until he whined out his striking defence.

"They don't ought to let 'em hang things outside their shops like that. I'm as innocent o' stealin' that there coat as I am o' stealin' t' King. I'd nought to do wi' it. I wor passin' under it, an' it fell on me."

As compensation for damages caused by a careless tradesman allowing a coat to fall on his head, Joseph was given three months further hospitality in jail after waiting six weeks for trial; yet he was not satisfied. Indeed, his resentment was such that he kept away from this city until the need for men so impressed him that he joined the Army, as he tells in this letter:—

> "Happen you'll be a bit surprised to hear as I've joined. It wor like this 'ere. It wor no use coming home when I got out of prison

last time, so I tramped till I got to Hartlepool, and I found a job there as I worked at till that morning when some German ships came and played hell on the place.

"I'd just turned out with my cart, and was going along the street when a shell lifted a house about a mile into the air and dropped it again. I heard a awful scream, and I saw a young woman, as like our Clara as two peas, with a little baby in one arm, and t' other sleeve of her nightdress all bloody, pinned with a great iron girder and a lot of rubbish, so as she couldn't stir.

"Well, I worked like mad for ten minutes to get her from under, and many a hundred shells kept dropping, and one on 'em upset my cart and killed my horse while I wor helping that lass; but I got her free at last. She wor a brave wench. Though she'd lost a deal o' blood through one arm being shot off, and though she'd the child to look after, she smiled and thanked me afore she fainted away, and some people as had gathered round carried her to a hospital or somewhere.

"Happen you haven't seen Hartlepool since then. Well, you ought to do. It's a regular ruin. When I looked round, I said to myself, this isn't fairation; women and children don't come in for this sort of thing in proper war. These 'ere Huns want teaching manners a bit. I'm off. That's how I came to join.

"It's hard on a chap like me, is the drill, and they've a lot of soft rules in the Army as takes a lot of getting used to. But I shall stick it all right. I want to get to France to have a go at them Germans on land. I should have liked to tackle that lot as did that trick at Hartlepool, but they wouldn't have me in

the Navy, and I must do my bit where they will. I thought I'd write and tell you. Happen you'll think now as owd Joe can do some'at right."

I did; and I acknowledged it. But I did not covet the task of the men who had to lick Joseph into good military shape. It must have been trying work enough. Even he acknowledged it.

"I've never had a gaffer before," he said to me when on leave for a few days before proceeding to France; "an' I've cut up rough now an' then when I've been told to do soft things as I'm forced to do whether I like or not. But it's coming to me natural like now to be a good lad an' do as I'm told."

He sent me one or two letters from the trenches, acknowledging the receipt of an occasional package of cigarettes. His letters were not inspiring. The sergeant who handled him in training had pleased him better than the sergeant under whom he served in France.

"If he wor aught like him as we left behind us, he'd do," he wrote; "but he's a pig. He's a lot more edge on him than all the Generals in the Army put together. He gives you all manner of soft things to do, just for the sake of tantalising you."

Perhaps it was to escape from being tantalised that he volunteered to serve in a patrol party seeking to locate a bomb-thrower which was giving unpleasant attention. One outcome of his bravery was this, surely the strangest letter ever written by "a pig":—

"On behalf of one of the men of my company, Corporal Joseph Simms, I have to acknowledge with most grateful thanks the receipt this morning of your kind letter and the parcel of cigarettes accompanying it. Corporal Simms regrets very much that he

is unable to reply personally at the moment, and requests me to write instead.

"As a matter of fact, we have been a good deal annoyed lately by a bomb-thrower we call Louisa, which persistently dropped big bombs into our trench so accurately that she became a nuisance. Simms volunteered with other men to make an effort to locate the cleverly concealed position in which Louisa lay, and as soon as she began her pleasantries last night, started with three comrades on a reconnaissance which ended in their stumbling in the dark upon the party of Huns directing Louisa's movements. There was a hand-to-hand fight between equal numbers for a few seconds, and Simms, who had found a shovel in the enemy emplacement, made great sport of the business. Reinforcements pouring in from the enemy trench only added zest to his efforts. After the manner of old Umslopogaas of the Axe, and in a fashion such as would delight the heart of Sir H. Rider Haggard, he laid about him with the shovel, defending the pass against all comers. A chance thrust with a bayonet depriving him of the use of one leg, he stood on the other fighting on until he was at last felled by a blow on the head, and in falling he seems to have clutched at Louisa, who fell with him resting upon his unwounded leg and breaking it in two places.

"But he had put up such a fight that his comrades were able to overcome those who remained of the enemy, and to return bringing Simms in, with two unwounded prisoners, leaving at least eight injured Huns, besides blowing up Louisa.

"Your letter and package came as he was being sent to the dressing station. He asked

me to read the letter to him, which I did; also to reply to it, which I now do. As he lighted a cigarette, he said, 'Tell him I only got half that box of Kingdon's best: some cove must have opened the parcel and prigged t' other half on 'em; but I shall enjoy what there is: tell him them Huns hasn't knocked owd Joe out yet: he's paid 'em a bit back for that Hartlepool touch, and he's owing 'em a goodish bit yet as he'll pay back right enough in time.'

"He had lost very much blood, and looked so pale and ill, that I marvelled he found strength to speak in that surly, snarling whine you are perhaps familiar with — the one he adopts when he feels he has a grievance, which is not seldom. But he has, of course, a chronic and bitter grievance against the Huns; also our own postal arrangements do not meet with his fullest approval and confidence.

"Still, I should judge that he is a man who has greatly improved through Army discipline. His comrades recognise his weak points and make allowance for them, knowing that his merits far outweigh his small defects. We all trust that he may make a good recovery and soon be among us again."

After three months he rejoined his battalion; his last letter breathes out terrible threatenings against the Germans. In addition to what remains due on the Hartlepool account, he feels that he owes them payment for weeks spent in hospital. And "they mustn't think as owd Joe forgets aught," he says.

IX.

SAPPER TONY BARROW.

THE Sapper's father is, according to a faithful word-picture drawn for me by his brother-in-law, years ago, "a low-lived-looking, pug-nosed little reptile, as ugly as sin at the best of times, and bad-looking as the devil since he got that great cut from his nose to his right ear which ought to have killed him, and would have killed him if he'd been any good." He is no good. Besides being what his brother-in-law says, he is also a cur, an idler, a drunkard, a liar, a coward, a bully, a fool, and a knave. If any one can think of more and more expressive terms of opprobrium, let him add them. The worst that can be said of him will fail of an adequate description.

The abject lives in a Derbyshire mining village. He has not lived there long. He will not be there when this appears in type. People of his stamp cannot afford to stay in one place. It is his pleasure and his custom to move about. Moreover, he finds it a work of necessity. Fond of change as he is, he would hardly tackle the job of removing quite so frequently were he not obliged. Work of any sort is little in his line.

He has a wife, who has borne him five sons, counting Tony. The wife is a wretched, careworn creature, half starved, bent double by privation and disease, though only forty-five years old. All

her married life—that is since she was seventeen —she has lived under sentence of perpetual hard labour. By taking in neighbours' washing, or going out to do their cleaning, she has been the main support of her family these eight-and-twenty years.

When Tony, the eldest boy, was three years old, his father achieved a triumph which bade fair to relieve him of the necessity of continuing to do even that little work he had ever attempted —an occasional day in a coal-pit, undertaken to secure money for drink. The triumph consisted in perfecting the training of Tony in consuming beer until the baby of three was able to drink a pint without removing the mug from his lips. Then Barrow took this wonderful product of his genius the round of the public-houses within a radius of six miles, and made substantial sums by winning bets laid against the possibility of performing the miracle which he declared that Tony was able to work.

To the disgrace of that community, these disgusting exhibitions were tolerated for months. Then a landlord summoned up courage to veto a performance in his house, and instantly killed their popularity throughout that entire locality. To most men such a rebuff would have meant abandoning so wretched a business, and the taking to honest labour out of very shame. But Tony's father was not built that way. He merely removed his family, now containing two babies besides Tony, to another district of the same county. There he resumed his despicable, damnable wickedness, while his wife sought out fresh employers in the washing and charing line.

For nearly a year it seemed that he had made an excellent move. The social conscience of the people being even more dead than in the former locality, he was able to exhibit his production at

five years old as able to "sup a quart without breathing," and to win substantial sums thereby. The education authorities would possibly have interfered now that Tony was of school age, but that was rendered unnecessary by his father unwittingly entering an inn at last kept by a man. A quart of beer was called for and supplied. The customary offer was made to bet "any money you like—five bob, half a thick 'un, a quid—aught you've a mind"—that Tony could "sup t' quart up without breathing." It seemed to the assembled crowd in the tap-room an impossible feat. Much money was risked. The tankard was drained. The lost coins were handed over. Many idiotic compliments were paid both to prodigy and trainer. The excitement aroused brought the landlord, busily engaged in looking after a full house, into the room to see what all the pother was about.

Being told, he exclaimed angrily, "What, have you swine stood and seen a child like that sup a quart of ale! You want drownding in it—all the boiling of you. Call yourselves men! You're the lousiest lot of God-forsaken devils I ever clapped my eyes on to stand such a thing. As for the child's father, he ought to be hung."

He was bursting with indignation. A waiter appeared, bringing a quart of beer to the order of an admirer of Tony's father.

"Who's that for?" the landlord enquired, strongly suspecting the truth.

"Him," the waiter replied, indicating Barrow with a disrespectful nod.

"Let him have it then," the landlord said, taking the pitcher, and throwing the contents full in Barrow's face.

Losing his temper, Barrow sprang from his seat and attempted to strike the landlord, who was too nimble for him. It was Barrow who

found the floor. When he picked himself up he was invited into the back yard.

It was a moonlight night. All the company turned out to witness a fray which lasted only forty seconds, and ended in Barrow's face being hopelessly disfigured for life.

That put a final period to the abject's career as a showman. He left the district for another colliery neighbourhood. His wife had once more the trouble of seeking fresh employment, and he took once more himself, most reluctantly, to an occasional day's work in the pit "market": the "market" being that set of idlers or unfortunates who hang about every colliery to fill places left temporarily vacant by the illness or remissness of regular workmen.

He failed to secure a regular place for himself during the next thirteen years. Meanwhile the number of children had grown to five, all boys, and with only a year's difference in their respective ages. There would probably have been a much larger family; but the worthless brute contracted a foul disease which he passed on to his wife when she was twenty-three years old. Thenceforward she was even worse treated and more despised. She toiled like a galley-slave to support her boys, who, when they reached working age, were taught by their father to regard the squandering of earnings in public-houses as rather a fine and manly thing to do. That was with a view towards satisfying his own immoderate craving for intoxicants at their expense. So it came about that when Tony was eighteen, and his own and his brothers' wages aggregated the respectable sum of three pounds a week, only fifteen shillings of that sum was the average weekly payment handed to the mother towards the cost of their maintenance. The bulk of their earnings was wasted upon intoxicants and cigar-

ettes, and in gambling. It is a shameful and disgraceful fact that those young lads were frequently served with ale at public-houses until they became so helplessly drunk as to be unable to walk home. And the moral tone of the village in which they lived was so low that no complaint was ever made to the licensing authority for the district concerning the scandal.

The mother toiled wearily on. The father began to take life more easily again. There was less need for him to labour that he might procure drink now that he had five lads at work. He seldom troubled to turn up on the chance of finding a vacancy in the pit "market," and when he got as far as turning up, his insufferable independence caused him to haggle so much over terms that most of the pitmen ceased to dream of engaging as a mate one notorious both as a cantankerous fool and an idle vagabond.

About three o'clock one hot summer afternoon, Tony returned from his work at the pit among a company of similar youths, including two of his brothers. They were a disreputable-looking lot, ragged, toil-stained, perspiration rolling down their grimy faces, as they raced at a canter up the hill leading to the nearest public-house, the hindermost yelling in coarse and obscene terms to those in front admonitions "not to sup all t' ale afore" other folk got a chance.

Arrived at the inn, they appropriated seats in a not uninvitingly furnished tap-room, ordered strong drink, and proceeded to decorate the sanded stone floor with expectoration excited by the chewing of tobacco. When the ale arrived, they drank deeply, and soon began wrangling foolishly and with some heat upon subjects either of no consequence earthly, such as the exact date when a man whom they never knew ate two legs of mutton at a sitting, or about which they

possessed not the glimmering of an idea; such as whether, if England went to war, London would help her—their intelligent conception being that the metropolis was independent of the Kingdom.

It passes the wit of man to describe the abysmal ignorance of most debaters in low-class public-houses in mining communities. There is no use in attempting to do so. These apt pupils of past-masters in dialectical folly contrived to fall out sufficiently noisily to cause the landlord to eject them, especially as the seats they occupied were now required by slower-moving adult pedestrians who had by this time wended their way, hot and thirsty, from the pit.

Accordingly the lads, swearing horribly, proceeded to another inn, half a mile nearer to their homes. Again they ordered copious supplies of ale, and repeated the behaviour exhibited at the former place, adding the upsetting of a few tables as a protest against their dismissal when once more their room was preferred to their company. By this time they were sufficiently under the influence of drink to be really quarrelsome, and they began to taunt one another, and to "play the goat" with one another, after the manner of their kind. A few, including Tony's brothers, left the company and made their way home. The remaining nine youths stayed together, and presently entered a third public-house.

His deplorable early training had given Tony an inordinate appetite for strong drink, as well as an extraordinary capacity for taking it, and he was proud of his powers in this singularly sordid line. To torment him, one of the youths pretended not to believe that he could consume what it was notorious he could consume, and they came to blows when words failed. The landlord turned them out of the room after a quantity of pottery and glass had been smashed in the struggle, and

they continued to fight in an open space in front of the inn.

A large crowd gathered quickly. Tony, short, active, spare, pugnacious, had an advantage over his tall, slow, awkwardly-built, and hesitating antagonist. At most times he would have been first favourite with the crowd. But he was now evidently much the more intoxicated of the pair, and the usually less likely combatant secured most popularity at the outset. When Tony's father reeled up, his besotted intelligence was still sufficiently awake to realise that the condition of his son afforded him an opportunity of obtaining highly favourable odds in a little betting on the result of the fray, and having plunged heavily, he began to encourage Tony in language of coarse profanity. The sound of his father's voice appeared to rouse Tony. Ceasing to hit wildly, he paused for a few moments, took a little punishment calmly while watching his opportunity, then delivered his antagonist a terrible blow under the chin, which sent him violently backwards to the ground. The unfortuate lad fell heavily with his head on a stone and lay still.

Not realising that he was seriously hurt, his backers noisily made arrangements for settling with their creditors, chief among whom was Barrow, who led his son off in triumph to celebrate the victory with further libations. When Tony was helpless, he was carried home by his father and another similar brute. Considering the bearers' condition, it is wonderful that Tony reached home at all.

He did, however: for he was found there, "dead-drunk," as they termed it, by the police an hour later, when they went to arrest him on suspicion of causing the death of his recent antagonist. It having dawned on the intelligence of the by-standers that the youth must be seriously hurt,

or he would not remain lying on the ground motionless and still, they attempted to restore him by pouring brandy down his throat. This treatment being of no avail, they carried him into a room and sent for a doctor, who arrived in half an hour and pronounced life extinct.

The judge said some trenchant things about the morals of the county when he dealt with Tony's case at the Assizes. His remarks, too, concerning Tony's father were calculated to make an impression upon any one not corrupt beyond reach of shame. The jury found the youthful offender guilty of manslaughter. The judge, moved with pity as he contemplated the lad's sad history even in the incomplete form in which it was presented by the police, the half not being told, mercifully sentenced Tony to a long period of detention in a Borstal institution, his hope being that Tony would be cured by this means of all craving for alcohol, and be led to form habits such as would make of him a decent, self-respecting citizen on discharge.

When that time arrived, the Borstal authorities, after exhaustive enquiries, came to the sound conclusion that it was altogether undesirable to allow Tony to return to his parents. Consequently I was asked to receive him, and to do what I could for him.

It was found possible to provide him with a comfortable home hereabouts, and regular work, such as he had been accustomed to, in a coal-mine not more that a mile from his lodging.

A thick-set youth of twenty years old, with snub nose decorating a singularly plain face perpetually smiling when he took part in conversation, he was a frequent visitor at my house for the next twelve months. Sometimes the friend who provided the decent lodging he enjoyed found time to accompany him; at other times he came alone. About

his industry and conduct as a workman I never heard a complaint; his behaviour away from the pit was uniformly satisfactory, the only criticism offered by the good man who constituted himself his guardian was that Tony had no idea of the value of money: his wages were excellent, since he never lost an hour's work at a place of employment where trade was exceptionally brisk; but he seemed incapable of saving a penny. It was not that he had yet lapsed back into his old drinking habits. He was then a "pledged teetotaler," as he never tired of telling. It was just that if he had a penny in his pocket it burnt its way out. Time and again I urged him to open a banking account.

He was always going to do so: at the moment there was something he must buy; he would start saving "in two or three weeks, now"; but he never began. True, he had a melodeon, half a dozen mouth organs, a bicycle, a gramophone, several changes of raiment, a few rings, and other property to show when he had worked for a year after his release. But what he had in money was represented by wages due to him at any given week-end.

For the same reason that he was forbidden to return home on release, he was ordered not to visit his parents so long as he remained under my supervision as an associate of the Borstal association. On one occasion only I had to reprove him for disobeying this order. His excuse was, not that he wanted to see the careworn, broken mother who, when he was a child, had toiled to provide his daily bread, but the father who so ill-deserved his affection. He had been persuaded that his father was a changed character. "He's been very poorly," he said to me in his simple, child-like way; "and the doctor's told him he hasn't to sup any more beer. So he's turned teetotal. He doesn't sup aught but port wine and brandy now."

It was manifest that the lad believed port wine and brandy to be teetotal drinks; but he was a poor creature in the matter of intelligence. Though vastly improved, he had never really got over the effects of his besotted infancy and youth. Seeing his father's crafty hand in the business, I let Tony down gently, while cautioning him so severely against any repetition of the breach as to deter him from making another home visit until the expiration of the period during which I had any control over his movements.

But the very day that period expired he gave up work and lodging, and vanished without a word of warning. Learning that he was gone, I made enquiries concerning his latest movements, and especially as to whether his father had been known to communicate with him. They told me at the colliery that a man with a deep scar from nose to right ear had been hanging about the place a good deal just before Tony's departure, and that some of the colliery workmen had stated that this man was that youth's father. He had made some sort of pretence to be seeking work, but did not appear to have been taken seriously. Although Barrow had not been seen at Tony's lodging, I made no doubt that it was he who had visited the pit, and that his real purpose was to entice his son away.

Going to the village where last I heard of his family residing, I learnt of their removal four months earlier. I followed to the place given as their probable residence at that time, and found myself too late by three weeks. When I ran them down it was at a new model village connected with a recently opened colliery. Tony had secured work at a pit where his brothers had all been employed for a month.

He was stupid when I lectured him for going off in the way he had seen fit to do.

"Aren't I my own master?" he enquired of me, not unpleasantly nor disrespectfully, but simply, ignorantly. "Isn't my time up? I thought I could do as I liked now."

That was true. He was free to please himself whether he accepted my advice or not, and it was obvious that I had little prospect of persuading him to break altogether from his father's influence, as he well knew I wished him to do. Still, I was compelled in the lad's interest to make another attempt, and I warned him again as to the consequences which I feared would come of following his own inclinations.

"It'll be all right now, Mester Holmes," he said in his slow way, and with his unintelligent smile; "I shan't do nothing wrong no more. I don't drink aught but teetotal stuff, and I neither smoke nor gamble. You needn't bother about me, I'm sure."

I confessed that I could not help bothering; I was distressed that he had not shown better sense than to return home after the advice and warning given him, to say nothing of all that had been done to make him comfortable.

"Well, that's right enough," he agreed; "I'd good lodgings, and good work. But there's no place like home, is there? And then, my father's very badly [ill], and not fit to werk; so I mun help a bit, you know."

"No place like home;" the lad meant as much as the best-circumstanced among us mean by those words. If it was home only in the sense that to a pig its sty is home, still it *was* home to him. But the wretchedness of the place! It was not dirty; but it was bare and comfortless to a degree. It was possible to remove all the household goods with a wheelbarrow in three journeys. The feat had been accomplished more than once, and the bags of straw which counted as beds were reckoned in at that.

Looking at the worn-out mother, bent double with toil and the brutality of her husband before she was forty years old, and seeing her hopeless, pathetic misery of countenance, I could have been well content that Tony should have remained in circumstances of even greater peril had his idea been to help and comfort her. But it was not: so far he was helping, certainly, unlike his brothers, who still pursued the course they were all following when he "happened his misfortune," wasting the great bulk of their earnings, and never handing their mother half the sum they ought. In their company, and once more under the direct and constant influence of him who had been responsible for the evil course of all, how long could Tony's present good conduct be expected to continue?

The father reeled in while I was at the house. I knew him at once by the deep scar from nose to right ear, which had been given me by one who knew him well as his identity mark. I had been told he was still in ill-health. My guess that he would not be neglecting medicine in the shape of the peculiar teetotal beverages I had heard he had taken to was confirmed. Brandy had been his medicine in big doses that day.

Tony introduced me as "My friend, Mester Holmes, father, as you've heard me talk about," smiling the while as was his custom.

The father extended a dirty paw in welcome. I am not particular, really; there are few men whom I have interviewed, and with whom I have not shaken hands. But one has to draw the line somewhere. I drew it here. Instead of grasping the paw I ignored it, grasping the nettle instead.

"Do you know," I enquired, "that the authorities are greatly annoyed at your conduct in enticing your son from the place where he had been settled, and was doing so well?"

"Well," he replied huskily, "what are they going to do about it then?"

That was as good a way of answering me as he could possibly have adopted had he been quite sober. He had put his finger on the weak spot in my case. Nobody could do anything. I had grasped the nettle in vain.

Not because there was nothing said, but because nothing came of it, I wasted no more time over the interview. I left that desolate, comfortless dwelling, strangely out of place as one imagines (not at all singular as a matter of fact) in a "model colliery village," baffled and annoyed. I paid two more visits later. Then the family removed, and I lost sight of Tony. The war came. In October 1914 I received this letter:—

"DEAR MESTER HOLMES,—I'm a soldier; what price that, eh, Mester Holmes! Well, they come round to our pit second week in August, and said as all single chaps ought to 'list, 'cos everybody wi' t' pluck of a louse wor wanted. So I says, I'm one what's going; I am that! And I chucked my job, and went right away. But when I got there (to the recruiting office) they tell'd me as I should have to put a bit of horse-muck in my boots[1] and shoot up a bit afore they could take me. So I had to go back to my job. I'd broke teetotal a good while afore, I'm sorry to tell you—'cos you won't like to hear that—but I'd never been half as drunk as I got that night; I wor so disappointed like. Well, I went to work next morning wi' a thick head, but thinking as if I weren't tall enough for t' army, I weren't too little to get coal wi' any of t' blooming lot on 'em. I worked like a nigger that day, and all along after, till a

[1] A common local simile borrowed from forcing plants in a hot-bed.

chap told me as they were taking 'em shorter. As soon as he told me that, I downed my tools again and started off. And I got through and all.

"My father made a lot to do, and cried like a child when he knowed as I wor going. But he come to t' station to see me off. He's not a bad sort, isn't my father. I know you blame me for sticking to him, Mester Holmes; but if he were your father you'd do t' same, shouldn't you now, fair? But I don't want to get any bother up. I'm writing to let you know where I am, so that you can write to me now and then, same as you do to some other chaps what's here.

"There's some talk of us going to France soon. You see we don't want a deal of training. It's a lot like our own job, what we've got to do—sappers, they call us. We're going to get tunnels out for 'em, so as they can get at them German beggars under t' ground. We don't need teaching nought besides what t' officers mean when they shout out this and t'other; 'cos you see it would be awkward if we didn't understand what they wanted us to do when they shouted to us down t' pit, like.

"I forgot to say as I'd learnt to smoke; and if you'd two or three cigs you cared naught about, like you've sent to Jimmy Mellors, I should be pleased with 'em, just to remind me of old times, do you see, Mester Holmes. I think this is all this time.—From your old boy, TONY."

It is rather difficult to present the letter in a form intelligible to the general reader. The spelling was phonetic, and the dialect that he was accustomed to from his youth. As editor, I have left it as close to the original as I could, while trying to make its meaning apparent to most folk.

I thought on receiving the letter, and I think now, that Tony was not at all anxious about cigarettes. He was seeking to secure a reply, and added his supposed want as a sort of extra inducement for me to write. He realised that whatever I might think of some of his acts in the past, I should have nothing but admiration for his decision to serve King and Country. He longed for a little of that sympathy and praise which, perhaps, he thought he discerned in certain letters I had written to Jimmy Mellors, and which Jimmy, as I had heard from one or two other men, hawked about a good deal.

I was sadly in arrears with my correspondence, and did not get a letter off to Tony till seven days were gone. A week later, my letter, with the accompanying cigarettes, was returned. It was an isolated sample of stupidity in Army postal arrangements which I have generally found to work marvellously well. Tony had been sent to France, and instead of forwarding the letter and parcel after him, they returned them to me. Consequently I got a letter which for pure pathos I have never seen surpassed:—

"DEAR MESTER HOLMES,—I'm sorry I've made you so mad. I know as I went and did what you said I hadn't to do. And I never come near you, nor wrote to you, nor nothing, after I'd slipt you, when we left that place as you found us at. And I've done wrong. And I'm sure I'm sorry; I am that.

"But I didn't think you'd chuck me over when you know'd as I'd 'listed. I haven't very many friends; and I can't bear to think as I've lost you. For I can see now what a friend you've been to me. I can that. I can see you now, sitting in that there dining-room at your house, and your missus bringing cocoa and minch [mince] pies in, on a nice white cloth,

like as if I were a lord, and when I wor full up, saying, 'Won't you have another?' Aye, but I shall never forget them nights! If you've forgot me, Mester Holmes, I shall never forget you. Why, it makes me all of a tremble when I think as you've chucked me over, and I feel fair sick of everything. And then I work till I'm all of a muck sweat to try and shake it off.

"Won't you write and say as you'll look over things, and give me one more chance? You can't fight, Mester Holmes; you're too old, and you haven't been trained, like; and it'd kill you out here. But I'd lay my life down cheerful to-morrow to show I'd not forgot you, and not forgot the missus neither, nor that hot cocoa, nor them minch pies. I would that. Us chaps as is here is trying to make up for what we've done amiss; and it's nice to think as now we can help them a bit as has tried to help us. Don't think us worse than what we are. And don't chuck poor Tony over for good, but forgive him."

That letter was answered by return of post, and I took pains to write in the clearest and simplest English I could command. I did not wish to run the least risk of being misunderstood. My returned letter I enclosed with its envelope, and I also sent the parcel of cigarettes with its original wrapper under cover, with a pair of mittens, two pairs of socks, some cake, and some mince pies.

"I wor never more thankful in my life than I wor yesterday," Tony replied straightway: "it put new life into me, to get your nice letters and them there presents, and to know that it wor all right after all, and you hadn't chucked me over. They got up and banged handfuls of muck at me a time or two to stop me from singing; I wor that pleased I couldn't

help making a row when everybody else wanted to sleep. It wor nice to know as we're friends again."

Even that was not enough, for the same night he wrote this further acknowledgment:—

"I've been reading them letters over again, and they made me cry like a child. I've been a bad lad, Mester Holmes; I know I have; and I'm sorry. And all them good things you've sent me, what your missus made and knitted for me, when I've never done what you told me, and when I've chucked your kindness right in your face, like.

"Well, I'm going to be different now, and when I come back I'll call and see you reg'lar. I will that. I shall never forget you no more. My word, I shall work to-morrow. There's nobody here can lick me at my job. I'll bet as I throw two shovelfuls o' dirt out to anybody else's one. And I'll do three to them one to-morrow. It's fair set me up, hearing from you."

He showed the letters to Jimmy Mellors, and that acquaintance of former days informed me that Tony "must be touched a bit"; he was "swanking about" because I had "wrote to him, as if nobody else" ever received a letter from me. "But I will say this," Jimmy continued, "there isn't a bigger demon for work in this world. He's always ready to do his bit, and he knows naught about danger. We all like him, for all that he's a bit touched."

Poor Tony's brain had never really recovered from that steeping in alcohol which it had in his early years. Also, his strange, dog-like fidelity to his father, so hard to understand, remained.

"I don't know whether you've heard as all my brothers have joined," he wrote to me in November 1915; "well, they have. It's hard

lines on my father, of course, him being so badly, and none of us to work for him. Our family's doing it's share, isn't it, Mester Holmes—five on us soldiering? Well, we're all allowing him three shilling a week apiece, and Government makes it up, so he just manages."

Not one word about his mother! I wonder why? Probably because, while the father stood to the lad's mind for boon companionship, careless generosity, and strong admiration of himself as a genius, the poor mother was regarded merely as a tormentor perpetually finding fault with all his ways, as she was bound to do, both in endeavouring to counteract the father's evil influence and so as to obtain the most meagre portion of the lad's wages towards the upkeep of the house.

Early in December 1915 Tony was busily employed with two companions, driving a sap towards an enemy position when a counter-sap was accidentally bisected, and a strong party of Germans encountered. There was a short and sharp fray, the British miners, armed only with shovels, giving so good an account of themselves that the enemy beat a precipitate retreat, while their victors stopped to poke fun after them. The jocularity was ill-timed. A mine was sprung. Tony was dug out of the fallen sap a few hours later, wounded to the death.

The nursing Sister under whose care he lay for only half a day wrote me this from a hospital in France:—

"I have a copy of your book about your 'Police Court Friends,' and so I was able to identify your photograph, cut from the wrapper of another copy of the book, and treasured among the papers of Sapper Barrow, who has just died here. As he was probably referring to your wife's kindness at the last, I

think it may interest you to know just how the end came.

"I was standing by his bed when he rather startled me by saying quite plainly and distinctly, 'Thank you, mum; you're very good, I'm sure.' It seemed that he had regained consciousness, but on stooping down I found I was mistaken. He was wandering, but only for a second. Opening his eyes wearily then, he murmured very slowly, 'Oh, it's you, Sister, I see. I thought it wor Mrs Holmes wi' some nice hot cocoa and some minch pies.' Then his eyes closed again, and he was still for ever."

It was more than kind of the nursing Sister to write thus. Her letter was even more welcome than she knew.

For all his early disadvantages, Tony knew how to do his duty with the bravest and best. "He did that."

X.

STOKER GEORGE PEARY.

I HAVE noticed that it is the fate of some people to be often thrown into the company of unreasonable men. It matters little where they go, their experience is always the same. They do not find folk willing to adopt their point of view, however much there is manifestly to be said for it.

For example, George Peary told me quite plausibly how, finding himself in a friend's house, and seeing the goodwife's purse carelessly laid on the mantel-shelf "for anybody to pick up," just to teach the woman the virtue of caution, and incidentally as a joke, he slipped that purse into his pocket. That he instantly forgot all about the matter was due to his getting involved in a strong argument about the Boer War, then raging, his friend chancing to come into the house shouting, "Three cheers for old Kruger!" at the very moment when the transfer of the purse was accomplished.

Of course, no Englishman could calmly stand that sort of thing. It is small wonder that all remembrance of the purse was driven out of George's mind. His mental powers had sufficient occupation in evolving arguments pointed enough to penetrate the skull of that "drunken old fool," as he pleasantly described his friend.

There was nothing extraordinary, under the circumstances, in the fact that he walked off with the purse on leaving the house, "never having thought no more about it." It was natural enough that, putting the purse away unnoticed with his best clothes on that Sunday night, there should be nothing till the arrival of the police on the Tuesday following to remind him that it remained in his possession.

A good deal was made of the fact that the purse had been emptied of its contents. But everybody does strange things in the heat of an argument, and George thought it quite possible that, fumbling about with the purse while he was talking, he had unconsciously opened it. In that case the money would naturally tumble into his pocket, and, mingling with his own, pass unnoticed when he hurriedly transferred possessions from Sunday to week-day garments. That he chanced to be out of work was no fault of his. He had been ill, but being poor, had not called in a doctor, and had no medical certificate to produce to a master who was sceptical about his complaint, calling it idleness, and dismissing him because of a few days' absence from duty.

The strange thing was that anybody should suspect him of theft. For that there was but one explanation. His friend was unfit to argue with. He allowed his political opinions to bias his judgment. The purse being missed, he suspected George of stealing it, merely because George declined to allow his absurd pro-Boer utterances to pass unchallenged. That it chanced to be found in his possession was nothing. A good many people, lawyers, for instance, and bankers, hold other persons' property for safety. Very likely they cannot always remember exactly what they hold. We are all liable to forget or misplace things. The world would cease to be tolerable as

a place to live in if we accounted one another thieves for that.

It was George who was really hurt, not the owner of the purse. It is surprising that the police, having heard his explanation, failed to see the matter in that light. To hurry him off to the lock-up, and put him in a cell for a night, was adding insult to injury. Of course he had a "character." He had picked up a good many purses in his day, always quite accidentally. But even had he been guilty of certain crimes for which he had innocently suffered, he might have been given credit for amendment of life. "Because a man has been a thief once, it doesn't say as he's always going to be one." Wherefore the police acted harshly in treating him as they did.

He both looked and felt a deeply injured person when he stood in the dock to answer the charge, showing considerable impatience with the evidence. He had a defence which was at least intelligible, had he cared to use it. He ought to have let the various witnesses unfold their story without comment, merely enquiring of each, "Do you think I intended to steal the purse?" if he thought it worth while. Then, when his turn came to speak, he should have put before the Court in few words his own account of the affair.

Perhaps he would have adopted this obviously common-sense course had he received fair treatment. The unreasonableness of witnesses, who, on the slenderest foundation, had already in their own minds convicted him of theft, caused him to lose his head, he said. He quarrelled so violently with every one that he had to be warned and suppressed many times by the Bench. In his excitement, it seemed as though he wished the Court to believe that he had never seen the purse, and strongly suspected that he was the victim of a dastardly act by some person who, owing him a

grudge, had put the purse in his pocket to secure his conviction and imprisonment. It was unfortunate that the only people to whom this suspicion could possibly refer were the owner of the purse and her husband. Of course such an act on the part of either was not impossible. Its improbability was so obvious, however, that the suggestion did George a great deal more harm than good. The Court felt also that his pro-Boer argument tale, which he dwelt upon with much bitterness and at great length, was undiluted nonsense, and wearied of hearing it. Even George recognised that he had adopted a wrong line of defence when the Chairman asked him in a tone full of meaning—

"Have you aught else you want to say?"

Too late, he tried to change to a sane excuse—

"It was only a lark," he urged.

"Oh," said the Chairman: "a lark, was it? We've cages for larks here!"

And George occupied a cage for three months.

He cannot be blamed for feeling that a person holding the office I hold would take a reasonable view of his case. It was merely my duty to assist in securing recompense for his innocent sufferings, undergone because of the obtuseness of magistrates and the cantankerous wrong-headedness, if not the malicious spite, of prosecutors. To put me in the way of discharging that duty, he called as soon as he was let out of the cage.

I disappointed him sadly. After he had occupied an hour in making his complaint, also assuring me that the prison officials had told him that he had a good case against the Bench, I remarked that if his statement of what they said were true, the officials had been "pulling his leg": he had no grievance at all. I had not the remotest shadow of a doubt as to his guilt. The magistrates could not possibly have decided otherwise.

"Well," he remarked, with a deep sigh, "I *am* surprised. I thought you were here to help folk! What's the good of having a Police Court missionary if these sort of things are to keep going on? I call it taking money under false pretences. If you are not here to see justice done, what are you here for?"

When a man puts a matter in a form like that it is difficult to answer him. Knowing my limitations I made no pretence to do so.

"I'm afraid I must leave you now," I said, rising from my chair and putting on an overcoat. It was winter, and the day was cold.

"Ah, that's it," he said; "that's how suchlike as me gets served. I waste half a day telling my case to a man as is paid to help me; then, instead of doing aught, he gets up and puts his topcoat on, and says 'I'm afraid I must leave you now.' It's a nice thing for me, isn't it?"

He imitated the tone of my voice so perfectly and so ridiculously that I could not help bursting into laughter.

Then the humbug saw his opportunity. Changing his manner completely, he pleaded—

"Well, Mr Holmes, if you won't take my case up, for God's sake give me sixpence for a bit of bread; I haven't bitten a bite all day. I haven't a copper, and I'm fair famished."

I gave the sixpence to be rid of him. It was a mistake. He was waiting for me when I returned to my rooms next morning.

"I've got promise of a job," he said, "down at Brown's. Pay for a week's board and lodgings for me, there's a duck. I'll see you have it back. I want to start work this dinner-time."

"Who's your foreman?" I enquired.

"Bill Green."

"What department?"

"Moulding shop."

"Very well: I'll telephone."

"He won't know my name."

"How's that?"

"Well, he won't."

"Why?"

"I didn't tell him my name: he only asked me if I wanted a job: and I said I did; and he said, 'All right, come down to-morrow at dinner-time, and I'll start you in the moulding shop.'"

"Well, I'll ask him if he's going to start an ugly little fellow, about thirty, with a big red nose, this dinner-time, in the moulding shop. That will do, won't it?"

"He won't know me."

"Why—what's wrong with the description?"

"Nought: he won't know me, though."

"Of course he won't. You needn't tell me that. You've never spoken to him. Bill Green doesn't work at Brown's. You've got hold of the wrong shop. Clear out!"

"Aren't you going to do aught for me, Mr Holmes?"

"I hope not: nothing pleasant, anyhow."

"But I thought you were here to help folk?"

"Yes: you said so yesterday. I'm not here to help you, though."

"Why? You've helped many a villain as I know on. Many a score's took you down."

"Oh, I daresay. I've been caught asleep before now, only too often. But that's no reason why I should be taken in again, and with my eyes wide open, is it? Now, no more arguing: be off!"

He went away very reluctantly, and grumbling and swearing terribly.

In an hour he came back to enquire—

"What am I to do? I've no money: where am I to go?"

The question was easy—

"To the workhouse," was the obvious answer.

I met him there later on. Making a virtue of necessity, he settled down to his tasks and gave so little trouble that, an opportunity arising, I determined to afford him another chance. He gratefully accepted an offer of a berth as stoker on a steamer, being used to similar work ashore. When he called to receive his railway ticket and sea-kit, he sought to reward me by presenting me with the result of his researches into a difficult chapter of the problem of social reform.

He had "studied things over" while in the workhouse, he said, and had come to the conclusion that these matters were ridiculously managed.

"There's many a young fellow in that place like me, what's never had a wife," was his conclusion; "and there's a whole lot of fine lassies. And they keep 'em apart to that extent they can't get a word wi' one another. Now, if they'd let 'em mix up free like, there'd be many a good match made there. There's no wonder they've allus got a house full. They never give 'em a chance to pair off."

It is a singular fact that intelligent people are to be found who fail to see how this "pairing off" which George advocated would tend to lower the number of inmates sheltered by our workhouses. But it provides only one more instance of George's unfortunate fate in finding his most carefully thought-out opinions to clash with commonly accepted views.

My own reception of his brilliant idea was extremely cold. He noticed it, and it pained him deeply.

"I thought as you'd see the point right away," he complained; but pitying the obtuseness of my mental vision, he kindly reiterated his views on our way to the railway station, and I bundled him into the train before his argument was completed. He finished it in a letter which gave

much information also concerning mistakes made by owners and captains of ships. As he had acquired the right to lay down the law on these matters in about twelve hours, his opinions were valuable.

It is not surprising that, with his customary ill-luck, he got among a ship's company "of the biggest fools created," as he told me in a further letter; and that the captain was "a regular nigger-driver," besides being the "most unreasonablest man what ever lived." Under the circumstances nobody could blame him for changing ships at the earliest opportunity. It is nearly incredible that it was his hard fate to make a change for the worse. But he shall speak for himself:—

> "You can't have no idea, sir, what sort of a life you send men to when you 'tice 'em to go on a ship. It's regular downright slavery, and neither more nor less. And then the company: it's not fit to mix with! Language! it would make you shiver to hear the way them blacks curse. I'm right thankful as I don't understand all on it, but it's terrible bad I can tell by what it sounds like, and by the murderous look as they have when they're using it.
>
> "That other ship was a regular hell, but this is a million times worse. Nobody fit to talk to; all of 'em as can speak English as stupid as pot mules, with no notion of argument; cursing you if you happen to contradict 'em, and thinking as everybody's thieves. It's fair rotten to be among suchlike.
>
> "Then the coal as this ship uses: it takes about five tons to make the boilers hot enough to sit on, and about a hundred to get up a ounce of steam. You may toil and slave as you like; it isn't possible to give satisfaction with rubbish of this sort.

"I thought it naught but my duty to tell the captain a thing or two about it, and to put him in the way of knowing what sort of coal would do us a bit of good. He only sleered[1] at me. 'I shouldn't wonder but what you're right, my lad,' he says. 'I'll tell the owners as when they want a coal buyer in the office they couldn't do better than set you on. If you know as much about coal as you know about grousing, you'll make a fortune for 'em.'

"Of course I'm used to being treated like that. But there must be some decent fellows somewhere. We don't get back to England for a goodish while. I shall stick it till we do. Then I shall try another change. If that's no better, I shall give up going to sea and try my luck on land again."

The third ship when tried proved to be "the limit," and the captain to be "a devil without a chain." Accordingly George was driven to try his luck on land again within two years of that day when first I sent him to sea.

His luck was bad. He wandered to Liverpool from Cardiff, and was arrested by the police of the former place on a charge of stealing three diamond rings, or alternatively with receiving the same, well knowing them to have been stolen. He was sent for trial, and sentence of twelve months' hard labour was passed upon him. I heard all about it when he came to me on release.

It was the old story of suspicion and misunderstanding. Because he chanced to walk into a jeweller's shop in Cardiff on a given day to ask for a closer view of certain rings which had attracted his fancy in the window, it must needs

[1] He means "ridiculed me."

be suggested that he had pilfered others from a tray on the counter while the assistant's back was turned. The rings he enquired about being beyond his purse, he civilly told the assistant so and left the shop. It was very hard on him that some thief should enter almost immediately and commit the robbery. For a description of George was circulated broadcast, and he was taken, "as innocent as a new-born babe," when he reached Liverpool.

Rings are much alike. When the jeweller identified as his property the three taken by the police out of George's boots, he doubtless believed he was speaking the truth. George did not blame him. He blamed the police and counsel and judge and jury for wrong-headedness in attaching importance to the fact that he carried valuables in his boots.

"I bought these rings at different times and different places in foreign parts, Mr Holmes," he assured me; "believe me or believe me not, I got 'em all honest as day. I knew there were a lot of rogues on the ship, and I kept 'em in my boots for safety. Besides, it kept them bright and new-looking."

"What did you buy them for?" I interrupted. "What good were diamond rings to you, whether they kept bright and new-looking or not?"

George gave me a scornful look and answered—

"That's just what that fool of a judge put to the jury: 'You have to consider, gentlemen,' he says, 'whether a man in the prisoner's station would be likely to purchase diamond rings at home or in foreign parts.' As if diamonds aren't always a good investment! When a man's worked hard for twenty pounds, he doesn't want it sneaking, and it takes up a lot of space in his boots in money, but next to none in a ring: and sailors has no safes to keep their valuables in. 'You've

got to consider again, gentleman,' was another thing as that old washerwoman said, 'whether it is reasonable that he should keep rings in his boots if they are his own property, as he says. I should have thought that method of concealment a very likely one for a thief to adopt, but that no honest man would dream of wearing rings on his feet.'

"Of course my lord Know-all was well aware that working men has jewel-cases which they carry their rings in when they're travelling, and safes to put 'em in when they're at home, and valets to look after 'em. I didn't expect much from him, or from the barrister who spoke for the police. But I wor a good bit disappointed as the jury hadn't more sense. There wor one among 'em as worn't quite such a lunatic as the rest. He did seem to stick up for me, and they left the box to argue it out with him in private. He hadn't pluck enough to stand by his opinions, though. So when they came back it wor, 'Guilty.' But I've suffered innocent. I never deserved them twelve months."

He returned to the workhouse: he could be recommended nowhere else. The reform he had mentioned as desirable not having been carried into effect, he grew quickly tired of society there, and took his discharge. I saw no more of him for a long time, and then he called to prefer a request for help, which I refused. It came as a surprise for me to receive the following from him:—

> "Somewhere in the North Sea, forty-four years old; four years too old for a job in peace time, but young enough for a job as nobody else wants—fishing for mines here in time of war, where a fellow's pluck's tried as is isn't tried nowhere else.
>
> "I'm a lonely lad: they're a rum lot on this trawler, and I don't mix up with 'em

much. Because my work's in the stokehold they think I know nought about fishing, but I could teach the lot on 'em a thing or two. Only they're too stupid to listen to me, so I let 'em alone. But I will say this: If they'd try my way, they'd fish up two mines where they get one now, and a lot less danger. It isn't my fault as they're so pig-headed. I didn't make 'em; so I'm not responsible. If they won't take no notice of what I say, well and good; they can't say as I haven't told 'em; and I shan't bother no more.

"You know one fellow we've got here, George they call him, same name as me. He showed me a box of chocolate as you'd sent him, and it reminded me as you might send me a pipe and a bit of tobacco if you knew as I hadn't had a smoke for a week. I hope I aren't asking too much. I will say this, Mr Holmes: if we haven't always agreed, you've been a good friend to me, and I'm sure I can rely on you now."

He got what he asked for, only to lose the pipe when the trawler was blown up shortly afterwards, that George he mentioned being the one member of the crew who died.

With the rest he found another ship, on which he served six months, mine-sweeping at first, and then on what he called "private business." It had something to do with decoying enemy submarines. I do not quite know what. At any rate he was wounded in the head and the arms while engaged on that service, and he will be fit for active work no more.

It was pathetic to see him, with head swathed in bandages and arms hanging helpless, when he called last. Yet who, knowing his character, could be expected to resist a smile when he gravely told—

"It was all our captain's fault. I could have told him what would happen. Any man could have done. But they seem to appoint captains with no sense. They must have a rule as they won't take anybody with gumption till they've used up all the idiots. What beats me is the way the men stand it. But nobody seemed to see it but me.

"It's no use grousing now, though. There's no more sea for me. I thought I'd like to see you and let you know as I'd had a hand in sinking one or two of them German submarines, and show you what I look like after it. Besides, I'm hard up for a bit of spending money. These 'ere horspitals isn't managed as I should like to see 'em. There's many and many a thing as a man ought to have got for him as he's either to buy out of his own pocket or else go without.

"There'll be a deal of settling up to do after t' war."

George's special idiot of a captain writes of him to-day:—

> "We'll see that he has a nice light job as soon as he's fit for it; he's changed a lot since he came to us, and we understand him, anyhow. We'll look after his bread and butter, tell him. He's earned it, right enough."

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XI.

PRIVATE GARRETT.

Now and then a publican seeks me out to request me to attempt to persuade some man or woman to renounce intoxicating drink. There are folk who regard all engaged in "The Trade" as without conscience. I have not found that to be the case by any means. Indeed, I hold the opinion that many publicans possess admirable qualities, a more generous recognition of which would produce excellent results. I say this all the more gladly as I have no special love for the business in which they are engaged.

Fourteen years ago I had one of the calls I speak of. The publican, an intelligent and good-hearted man, was deeply concerned about a customer.

"I'm sorry to bother you," he said; "I know you've a lot to do. But I was thinking of you in the night,—I was lying awake, being worried about the way a young fellow I know named Garrett is carrying on.

"He's a bank clerk. He came as a stranger to this place about twelve months since, and he started coming to my house from the night he got here. I don't know as he's any friends or relations anywhere. He says, 'If I go to hell there'll be nobody to bother about me'; so it looks as if he hadn't. But he may be only talking

off the top for all I know. Only I never heard him mention anybody away from here as a friend.

"The first six months he behaved like a gentleman. He's good-looking and good-tempered, a bit of a singer, fond of a hand at cards, and he's no side. All the customers took to him. And there's no wonder. For he's had a grand education and talks like a book, and he's willing to do a good turn wherever he can.

"And that's what's brought me here. It seems such a thing to see him going wrong as he has been doing this last six months. He drinks a lot too much now, and he's gambling all day long. I'm afraid he's getting himself into a mess, because he's spending and losing a sight more money than he earns, I'm sure.

"Now when a man does that sort of thing it isn't only himself what suffers. His friends suffer and all. I can see as my best customers aren't coming so often as they used to do. They've had enough of him. So my house is getting no good from him. Not that that's what I'm bothered about. I could chuck him into the street and be rid of him, if that were all.

"It's just that it goes to my heart to see a fine young fellow like him making such a fool of himself. He doesn't want handling rough. He wants persuading to sign the pledge, and keep away from drinking and gambling altogether. And then he wants somebody to talk things over with him; and if he has tampered with the bank's money, to get him to promise to alter, and to straighten things out for him."

The publican paused here to see if I would volunteer my good offices in the matter. When I expressed my willingness to see what I could do, he thanked me warmly and went on:—

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised to find he's two hundred pounds wrong with his money, and you

can count on me for that much at least—more if you want it. Anything to see the lad straight again!"

I enquired for Garrett's address. It was given me, but I was also informed that my caller was quite willing to arrange an interview in a private room in his own house. Naturally I preferred to try Garrett's lodgings first, and I parted from my visitor without accepting his offer of a room.

I regretted this upon calling at the lodgings, where I was informed that he was seldom to be found except between midnight and half-past eight in a morning. Accordingly I made straight for the inn with a view towards taking the landlord's offer after all. It was about six o'clock in the evening. To my astonishment I found Garrett there already perceptibly the worse for drink.

My first impulse was to blame the publican for Garrett's condition; my next, which I acted on, to enquire where the intoxicants had been supplied. I found that frequent visits to a club at short intervals during the day were responsible for his state of semi-intoxication. He had been served with no drink in the public-house.

Looking at the fellow, I at once shared the landlord's sorrow that he should be so obviously going the wrong way. Handsome, about three-and-twenty years old, tall, of fine physique, a gentleman in breeding and education, but bleareyed, rakish, untidily dressed, babbling folly incessantly, steering straight for ruin, it was impossible to see him without feeling intense regret.

Probably the fact that the bar was empty accounted for the ease with which the publican enticed him into a private room. Certainly he was not over-pleased to see me when he learned the purpose of my visit. When the publican had set it out, he declared that there was no occasion for any one to worry. He was "quite all right."

But the landlord would have none of it. "Don't be a fool," he advised, "and don't buy other folk for fools. I know what you've lost with cards and with horses these last two or three months, and I know what salary you're drawing. You're getting shut of a lot more money than you're earning. Now, where's it coming from?"

Garrett was indignant. "You dare to call me a thief?" he exclaimed. "If you say anything like that I'll teach you manners."

The straight speaking had sobered him a little.

"When you begin your teaching I shall be there," the landlord continued, raising his voice a trifle and with a tinge of scorn, which disappeared immediately as Garrett said apologetically—

"Never mind, old fellow; excuse me, I know you mean well, but you must admit, old chap, you're a bit rough on me. You don't think I'm a thief, really now?"

"I don't think you're a thief intentionally," was the reply; "I think you're tampering with other people's money, and I think you'll find yourself a thief before you've done.

"It always starts like that. I'm going to be straight with you. You're making use of the bank's money, always meaning to put it back—always sure of a win every time you help yourself—and so far the win hasn't come off. And you're getting reckless. That's why you're drinking so hard. You want to forget what sort of game you're playing.

"Now, it won't do. You have a talk with this gentleman. Tell him the worst. If he can help to make things pan out all right, after all, he will. Take my advice. Do just what he tells you. I'm leaving you now. I'll look in again in an hour."

Left alone with Garrett, I managed to extract from him the confession that things were much as

the publican suspected. There was this besides: he was under notice at the bank. His honesty was suspected. He was well aware that in a few days the truth must come out. I enquired the extent of his defalcations: he thought about a hundred and thirty pounds. I suggested, from experience of similar cases, that if we doubled that sum we should perhaps be nearer the truth. I have usually found that when men adopt the course of conduct he had followed they gravely underestimate the amounts embezzled, and my opinion was not shaken in the least by Garrett's incredulity.

Asked what he was prepared to do if the defalcations were restored, he declared himself willing to do anything asked of him.

"I'll forswear drink for ever," he said; "I'll have nothing more to do with gambling of any description; I'll work hard at any job any one will trust me with; and the man who shows enough confidence in me to put me straight shall never be able to say I've let him down."

"And," I went on, "supposing that nobody can be found to put this trust in you—for, frankly, you don't deserve it—what then? Haven't you had enough of this idiotic line of conduct? Must you continue to play the fool except on conditions?"

"If no one will give me a lift out of this mess I may as well go to the devil," he answered sullenly; "with character and all else gone I shall never be able to look any one in the face again."

"I don't follow you at all," I argued; "look at the position. You have life before you. At, shall I say, three-and-twenty you have soiled your good name entirely from your own folly. It is due to yourself and to your family that you should make amends.

"If you are prosecuted and sent to prison you

still ought to pull yourself together. Have you a father or mother living?"

"No."

"Any friends?"

"No."

"Were your father and mother decent people, and had you ever a decent friend?"

He glared at me angrily. "Don't speak of my father and mother," he said. "No man ever had better; and as for my friends, they wouldn't care to own me now. They're a thousand miles above me. If I hadn't grown too fond of life, things would have been different with me. But I disgraced myself before I came here. My friends lost faith in me then. So I've gone my own way since."

"You did not disgrace yourself before in this way?" I asked.

"No, it was only drink and gambling then. I wasted my own money; I didn't tamper with other people's. They transferred me to this bank in the hope that I should do better in different surroundings."

"And you have done worse?"

"A thousand times."

"Supposing *they* know, what will they think of you?"

"Who?"

"Your mother and your father. I don't know that they can tell, where they are, how you are getting on—*that* is not revealed. But they may."

Garrett started, turned deadly pale, and clutching the table as though to prevent himself from falling out of his chair, exclaimed, "God! I never thought of that. And if they can see, she can see too.

"Let me tell you, now, I never breathed it before to a soul. My father and my mother both died when I was a boy of seven. An uncle

brought me up, and did as well for me as any mortal could have done. He started me in the bank at nineteen.

"I was very proud of that start, and had high aims. My cousin Mary and I were very much in love, and uncle approved. But Mary was too sweet and too good for this world. It broke her father's heart when she went, and he followed her within four months. Everybody pitied the old man, and quite right too. But nobody thought of me.

"I was nearly crazed with grief. I didn't wear my heart on my sleeve, but I started drinking so that I might forget everything. I went the pace, I can tell you, and I got among a gambling set. Nothing mattered to me now. Drink, gambling, women—anything to drive away reflection on what might have been. I got through two thousand pounds in a couple of years. Then they sent me here. And here I've done worse than before.

"But I never thought of Mary looking down on me and seeing my goings on until you spoke just now. God, it's true! I feel it's true. And my old father and mother and uncle Ben! Tell me, for the love of Christ, what shall I do? You've brought me near to madness. Now tell me what to do to make amends!"

He was perfectly sober now, but much excited.

"It is not for their sakes that I want you to be a man," I answered, "but for your own. I have said that I do not know that they can see your shame. We are not told that. But this we are told. All getting better, all turning over of new leaves, all overcoming of temptation and beating down of sin, they know. 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.'

"I want to be your friend. I want you, here and now, to have done with drink and gambling, and impurity and dishonesty, for ever. You will

never do that in your own strength, but there is One able and willing to help."

The publican came in as I spoke, and closed the door again after him as I began to utter the last sentence. I can never sufficiently express my admiration for that man. He took in the situation at a glance.

"Aye," he said, "that's what's wanted here—God's help. Let's get on our knees."

It was easy then, even in that strange place, to pour one's heart out; and it was touching to hear the sobs of the penitent and the sympathetic sighs of his friend. When we reached "Our Father," both joined in with choking voices, and when we rose from our knees no eye was dry.

I say nothing in disparagement of the solemn beauty of worship in some grand cathedral when I declare that no service I ever took part in more impressed me than that simple meeting in that humble room. It seemed as though God was verily present there to hear and answer the sighing of a contrite heart.

Afterwards Garrett explained his position at its very worst, so far as he was able to do so. There had been no forgery. That was something to be thankful for. His duties had given him access to money which he had used improperly, but his crime was not nearly so grave as it might have been; the bank could not be expected to retain his services since he had proved himself untrustworthy; but if the money he had taken were refunded it might not be felt necessary to institute criminal proceedings.

That was the publican's view, and he further expressed his determination to see his plan carried into effect. First of all, however, he insisted that Garrett must sign the pledge, and also give his word of honour as a gentleman that he would thenceforward have nothing whatsoever to do

with alcohol, or cards, or race-horses. Garrett readily put his signature to documents roughly drawn up to express what his friend required, and the publican and myself were solemn witnesses to what he swore.

Then the publican did a thing which for sheer great-heartedness I have never seen surpassed. It must be remembered that Garrett had been a customer at his house for no more than a year. For half that period he had been more a nuisance to the landlord than anything else. The benefactor was not conscience-stricken. Garrett had not acquired his drinking habits there. Nay, many a publican would have justly shown him the street door for daring to come to his house, had he turned up in the state I saw him in at the first moment of my interview, when he was fresh from a club.

The publican had just seen enough of Garrett to admire him for his gentlemanly education, breeding, and appearance, and for his genial good-nature. He felt it to be calamitous to see so fine a fellow going to the dogs for lack of a bit of friendly counsel and a helping hand.

"The missus and me have talked this over," he whispered in my ear, as Garrett sat at the table, his head in his hands, a picture of contrite misery, "and we've said we'd see him through this if it cost a thousand pounds, if only we could feel sure it would help him to make a clean new start. We can afford it. We've no children, and we've made a goodish bit. We've bread and cheese for life if we do part with a thousand pounds or so. And we've taken to this lad, like. He might be our own,—we think so much about him. Now I've seen him shamed, broken down, penitent, he can have that thousand if it's needed as free as air. I'm sure it'll be money well spent. For he's learnt his lesson as sure as there's a God in heaven."

Going up to Garrett he put his hand gently upon

the bowed head. "Cheer up, old lad," he said very tenderly; "we'll set everything right for you, God helping us. Now let this gentleman take you home."

He sent for a cab. Ten minutes later I saw Garrett safe at his lodging. I made him promise that he would go straight to bed. Then I returned to the publican and arranged with him to accompany me when I visited the manager of the bank next morning.

We were received pleasantly, and found the manager reasonable. It was impossible for him to allow Garrett to resume employment there, now that the worst suspicions were confirmed. But the books should be audited expeditiously, we were told. We might look to receive a statement of how things stood in a few days.

It turned out that the total sum misappropriated was three hundred and twenty pounds, seven shillings and eightpence. The publican wrote out a cheque for that amount, and all danger of a criminal prosecution passed away.

Garrett, who had meanwhile been under helpful influences, was much relieved when I told him the good news. He declared that nothing should ever cause him to forget for a moment the kindness shown to him; that he had fully made up his mind to make a new start, and that we might confidently look to him to show himself worthy of what had been done on his behalf. He remembered one friend away from this place, after all—in a bank in Canada. He would go out to him, as months before he had asked him to do.

I was curious to see the letter, which was produced. True enough, there was a definite offer of a good post, and the letter further stated that Garrett need not make up his mind at once. There would be room for him whensoever he cared to go.

My strong objection to this plan of emigration, which had evidently taken hold of Garrett's imagination, was that the work offered was not such as he ought to take again. If the truth were told of him, no disinterested principal would dream of entrusting to him such duties as he would be called upon to discharge. Quite probably his friend, hearing the truth, would still consider it only friendly to give him another chance. But that did not at all commend itself to my judgment. I had rather he had chosen farming, or cattle-breeding, or anything which did not involve the constant handling of other people's money. Feeling this, I ought to have insisted that he did not take the offer. The publican thought so well of it that I gave way. I have ever since been sorry I did.

Garrett went, wanting for no comfort, thanks to the princely generosity of the landlord and his wife. Soon letters came, one from Garrett, and another from the clergyman to whose care I had commended him. Both spoke most hopefully of his conduct and prospects.

Presently we heard of him as a teacher in a Sunday-school. The publican was delighted, and I was ashamed of a lurking suspicion that things were going too well to last. What troubled me was that Garrett made no attempt to repay the money expended on his behalf. I could not reconcile that with stories of his changed life and splendid prospects. And I am afraid it discounted very largely in my judgment the probable value of his Sunday-school work. Venturing once to mention my fears, the landlord reminded me, very feelingly, of that scene in his little parlour. It had made a tremendous impression on him, and he could not believe it possible that Garrett would ever for a moment forget it. I was not so sure. I recognised with infinite gladness that a mighty

work had been wrought there, but it seemed to me that Garrett was not the one whose life had been most touched thereby. No doubt I was wrong. No doubt the result was more readily apparent in one case than another. For the moment I seemed to be right.

To his unspeakable sorrow, the landlord received a jaunty note from Garrett, telling him that after two years' experience of his Canadian friend he had come to the conclusion that he was being kept back from that advancement which was due to him, and that he had given up his situation. He had several offers of better posts. He would write presently and tell which he had chosen.

About a week later the clergyman wrote, telling me that Garrett had left the district, his destination being unknown. There was a grain of comfort in this letter. It spoke of him in such a way as to make it evident that, for all the clergyman knew, Garrett's character was perfectly satisfactory at that time.

In due course a further letter came from Garrett, a letter in all respects deplorable. Not a word was said of the substantial sum owing to the man to whom he wrote, yet he had the impertinence to say that a thousand dollars would give him a share in a most lucrative business of a sort he did not see fit to describe, and to suggest that he who had helped him in the past would, he was confident, not see him handicapped now for want of a trifle like that.

I was grieved for the publican and his wife when they called on me with the letter. That their confidence in Garrett was gone was much more to them than the loss of their money, which, anyhow, they had never expected to see again.

"We had such hopes of him," the good woman said; "we looked forward to his coming to see us, and to thinking that with God's help we had had

a hand in making a gentleman of him once more. And he's going wrong again after all."

Her husband reiterated her regret. "I wouldn't have believed he could turn out like this after the grand start he had there," he said; "I know you was against it all the while, but I thought he had the best chance ever a man had in this world."

I suggested that things might not be so bad as they feared. It was just a poor attempt at consolation, for in my heart I felt they had judged right.

"No," the publican concluded, "he's got on the slippery path again. I make no account of his not saying anything before now about what I laid down for him. It's his soft, brazen cheek in asking for more, with never a word about the past. While money wasn't so much as mentioned, I could understand nought being said about the debt. But anybody except a downright wrong 'un would cut his hand off rather than write such a letter as that to a body he owes money to. That letter's the letter of a man who has got a long way downhill. We shall hear of him being in some bother before three months are gone. I care nought about the money I spent on him. If it had been three times as much I'd gladly have given it, and been thankful all my life I was able, if it had done him any good. It's the mess he's making of things for all we've tried to do that I care about. And, somehow, it robs of all their sweetness them two or three minutes we had on our knees that time, — you remember — as I've always felt I'd be thankful for to the end of my days. But now it seems all gone."

"No, not all," I suggested; "you value those few minutes for what came in blessing to your own life, as well as for what you hoped would come to his: and we will not despair. It may be that all will work right yet."

He grasped my hand warmly. "Thank you for that bit of comfort," he said; "I believe you're right. It comes back to me now; as he sobbed there, something told me not to be harsh with the lad, with all his faults he meant well. Happen I've expected too much of him. But you don't think I ought to send the money, do you? I will, if you think I ought."

"I am perfectly sure you ought not," I replied. "Write to him telling him that you are astonished and disgusted at his impudence, and that you fear he is on the downhill road again, or he would never have written you this last letter. Let him understand thoroughly how pained you are at his way of going on. That is the kind thing to do. It is also the right thing. I will write at the same time too, if you don't mind."

He did not mind; so the upshot was that Garrett received two candid letters which he never saw fit to answer.

It was five years before we heard of him again. Then the Chaplain of an English prison wrote to me on behalf of a man I "once knew, named Garrett," who was completing a sentence of five years' penal servitude for forgery, and who thought that I might be willing to help him when discharged, as he would be a fortnight later.

He came to me. At my request a contractor gave him work, carting coal. His former benefactor was anxious to help him into something better at once; but this time I was determined to have my own way. He must prove himself worthy before I would willingly see more money spent upon him. He was quite incapable of being trusted in any position of responsibility. But he was young and strong. Hard work in the open air would do him nothing but good. While he was doing it, it might be that he would realise what his wilfulness and folly had brought him

to, and bend his energies towards regaining character and confidence.

According to his story, the old mania for drinking and gambling regained its hold over him shortly before he left the Canadian bank. Indeed he stated that he gave up his post there because he felt himself to be gliding into evil courses, and was loth to disgrace himself in a town where he had taught in a Sunday-school. After that he never looked up.

Whatever might be the truth about his stay in Canada, during the fifteen months he was under police supervision after discharge from prison, here he wasted his earnings in the situation I got for him, living on the barest diet, and dressing like a scarecrow so as to indulge his vices of drinking and gambling. Twice during those fifteen months he went to fourteen days' imprisonment for drunkenness. His kindness to the horses, and his willingness to work hard, preserved his carting job for him on both occasions.

Exactly seven days after he had completed the period of police supervision, he called on me, much the worse for alcohol. In maudlin fashion he grieved over the fact that both the publican and his wife lay too ill to bid him good-bye, then bragged that he had won twenty-five pounds by betting, and was returning to Canada, where a sure fortune awaited him.

It was pitiable to see how low he had sunk. There was little left of the good looks and pleasant manners of former years. Words were useless and regrets were vain. I could but press upon him a copy of the New Testament, which he let me see he only took as a favour to me, and because I had placed my name in it. That was the last I ever saw of him. He sailed next day—on the first Friday of April 1914.

On New Year's Day 1915, this letter, written

from Salisbury Plain, reached his old benefactors:—

"My dear Friends,—I am heartily ashamed of my treatment of you. You have been all kindness. I have been all baseness and ingratitude. The worst man who ever walked God's earth was a saint in comparison with me. I feel that to the bottom of my heart. When I say that I really meant to make a clean new start on the night of your great goodness to me—aye, and for many a day after that—I speak only the bare truth. But I do not expect you to believe it. You could not, seeing how I have turned out. I was bad enough that night, but since I slipped back, I have been a thousand times worse. God knows I tried hard at the first: but it was all useless. The devil was too strong for me. He never let me alone for a moment. But I gave him the slip at last. I will tell you how.

The news came on the 4th of August that the day Lord Roberts had prophesied had dawned. We were at war with Germany! In an instant it flashed across my mind how often, in many a tavern, I had ridiculed that grand soldier as an old dotard when some better man than I praised his patriotism. I realised then that it was just idleness and cowardice and selfishness that prompted my ridicule. And I felt bitterly ashamed.

"Something seemed to say to me quite authoritatively: 'Be a man now: it is your one chance: redeem the past: do your duty.' I gave heed. The devil got the slip at that instant. In an hour I was a member of His Majesty's Dominion Forces. I came at once in contact with a soldier-saint. He has been my human saviour.

"I have done for ever with all the bad old past, with its vices and miseries. If I live, God helping me, I will prove it by paying back all that you have with such wonderful goodness spent on me—all, that is, except the most weighty part, the great love and sympathy bestowed upon one so unworthy, and priceless beyond redemption by aught I can do. And if I die, it will be thinking of you, and all you have been to me, my one regret that I must go with all that great debt, payable and unpayable, left untouched. But for the rest—my Country, my own dear Country, my King, my gracious sovereign, I go willingly to the fight. My God, I offer myself all unworthy, all conscious of my guilt, and bid Thee cleanse me and make me fit for the great fight to which Thou hast condescended to call me.

"You start as you read this. You say it is not like him. It is not. You knew me as I was too long, but not as I once was. Once, thank God, I knelt at the knee of the sweetest mother this world ever knew. And her influence and her teaching have all come back. And looking to Him to Whom she bade me look in those days, far away and yet so near, I thank Him from the depths of this gladdened heart, in that His wondrous love has guided my feet into the old paths, where alone peace and safety are to be found.

"Twice as I have been writing, I have jumped up and paced the hut. I had to do that or else burst out singing for joy. And there are those here who might misunderstand me if I sang what is in my mind. I myself could not understand what I feel until I had personally tasted it. But I am determined by God's grace that my life and not my lips shall speak the loudest now.

"I must close. And what can I say more? Only this: thank you, thank you, thank you for all your goodness to me; forgive me all that is past, and believe in me for the future. Write to me now and then, but please send me no presents. I have enough. There are those who need help. You are doing all you can for them, I am sure."

Garrett's signature follows. The letter lies before me. Reading it over again, one feels that the writer might have been anything had he trained and used his great gifts aright.

And that impression is deepened as I read afresh the only letters he ever favoured me with. One was written in April 1915 from "somewhere in France," where he was under a cloud. The old devil whom he so confidently regarded as done with for ever laid hold on him again before he left Salisbury Plain. He began drinking hard once more. Arrived in France, he was found asleep one night while on sentry duty, and was duly sentenced under military law, the sentence to take effect at the conclusion of the war. The news of his fall came as a heavier blow to the friends to whom he had written so hopefully than it did to me. In my opinion he was over-confident. Perhaps my more intimate acquaintance with the weakness and contradictions of natures like his sobered my hopes, as it enabled me also to see more than they saw in this letter addressed to myself—the first I received from him:—

"It is not easy to write to *you*, sir. I do not think I could if I did not realise that you are very familiar with men of my stamp, and if I had not experienced much of your forbearance and sympathy. But I have much to say, and my remissness in the past makes it necessary to start at the beginning. I will be as brief as I can.

"After taking that situation in Canada against your judgment and counsel, I quickly found that you were right. I had made up my mind to tell my friend there what were my besetting sins. And I made a start, but he would not listen to more than the first few words. 'You'll be all right here,' he said, 'let's talk of old times.' A bottle of wine was brought in. I broke my pledge, being too cowardly to confess my worst weakness, and my grand opportunity of starting straight was gone.

"The clergyman to whom you had commended me called the next day. He was a splendid fellow. I was rather cool with him, not knowing what you had told him about me. Perhaps he guessed that. At any rate he showed me your letter. When I saw how kindly you had put the matter, I could do no other than accept his offered friendship. I often think to what a tremendous extent trifles influence our lives. I verily believe that if that clergyman had called on me twenty-four hours earlier, my whole future would have been altered. As it was, I who had promised you I would tell him the whole truth, meaning to carry out my promise, felt that I need no more tell him than I had needed to tell the friend who gave me employment.

"The upshot was that the clergyman never had a true idea of my real character until it was too late. Seeing that I was in responsible employment, and that I was regular in my church attendance, also not knowing that I was drinking heavily on the sly, he urged me to become a teacher in the Sunday-school, and I consented. Before long I was at all my old vices once more, and all the worse man for playing

the hypocrite as well as playing hell. The letters I wrote to the good friends who had behaved so handsomely to me were of a piece with my life. I never had a dollar to spare towards repayment of debts, so I made up for that by weaving romances about my excellent way of living. The end of that chapter came with my detection as a thief. 'I won't prosecute you, for old acquaintance' sake,' the man I had wronged told me, 'but I'll give you twelve hours to clear out of this township. Here are a hundred dollars. I hope I shall never see your face again: my only regret is that I ever asked you to come to this country to your eternal disgrace.'

"There is no occasion to go into what followed. You know of my return to England. If I had been man enough to say all this when I saw so much of you, then and there, I should have been spared the trouble of explaining now. You know the utter degradation and misery of my life until the call came which brought me here. You will have heard of my conversion. Yes, in spite of fearful falls, that is the word! I have experienced a complete change of heart. But oh, the body of this death! 'The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do.'

"It came to me in that hell the other day. I will not attempt to record the fight. The newspapers have described it, if not accurately, at least in a way that will serve. I will speak only of what took place as we charged, mad to wreak vengeance on the perpetrators of that devilish gas outrage. And I will speak of myself alone. It seemed as though my reason left me. I went for the enemy, cursing so foully that the very memory of it makes me seek to hide my head with shame. As I

stabbed and smote, I cursed; and I cursed as I received a wound which, barely a scratch as it actually is, came within an ace of being mortal. How many found their deaths at my hand, only God knows. I make no account of the slaughter. That must be. But wherefore the curses with which I hurried men to doom, and how came I to utter them?

"I write as a fool. How should you be able to answer? It is your name in the New Testament by my side which makes me write this; and perhaps you may be able to give some comfort to a sick, bewildered soul. Strange that while I seek amendment of life with all my heart, the old devil should remain so strong within me. Can it be other than true that God is stronger than the devil?"

I replied to this strange letter, so full of tragic experience, as best I could. In November I received the following:—

"I am in hospital. They are keeping me here with the rest of the dangerously wounded. They tell me I am doing nicely. It is their kindness of heart which prompts that. I recognise their goodness and am grateful for it. It takes away half the horrors of war when one reflects upon the Christ-like devotion and self-sacrifice of doctors and nurses and chaplains. And I must add that no praise can be too high for the members of the R.A.M.C. who are not numbered among the classes just mentioned. All are splendid.

"It was not in the heat of battle that the bullet came which will presently bring my life on earth to a close. No doubt, God's grace. I had just read John iv. when duty caused me to leave the trench, and I was struck down. Thank God, no cursing that day.

"They brought me in when darkness fell. But

the six hours I spent on the ground! They were the sweetest I ever knew. I was in no pain, and I was not alone. Mary was there, and mother and father, and many 'loved long since and lost awhile.' And the words you spoke in the parlour of the inn came back to me, and with them the memory of all your kindness. I have said nothing of it before, and my heart is too full now. But it may cheer you, dealing with other black sheep, to know that the promise still stands, 'My Word shall not return unto me void,' and that bread cast upon the waters is not cast in vain.

"I knew all the while that my wound was mortal. As I lay there I thanked God for that. I thank Him still. There is but one cure for an erring soul like mine. There is but One who can give that cure. I go to Him most gladly. For I can never be safe save under the shadow of His wings.

"One great regret fills my whole soul. I must go empty-handed. Make no secret of my life. Perhaps for my parents' sake you will suppress my name. Call me Garrett. I used that alias for a while. For the rest, lay the secret of my life bare. Tell all young men to flee from drink and gambling and impurity: to be of good courage, speaking the truth from the heart, and playing the man. Let them learn from my evil life the bitterness of wicked ways. Do not let them think that, because of wonderful mercy shown to me, they may trifle with their opportunities and waste their talents. Oh, it is bitter, bitter, to look back! and all the more bitter as I realise more fully every moment what a privilege it is to serve the Master whom I spurned so long, and to know that regrets are vain.

"And blended with that greater sorrow is

one only less. The friends who helped me so liberally, though I was nothing worth, and whom I have treated so shamefully, what must they think of me? Such poor possessions as I have they will receive when I die, and I hope and believe they will realise that if I had the means nothing would give me more relief than to pay back all I owe. I crave their forgiveness; and I feel I have it before I ask.

"I would that I could return to you your last gift, given when most men would have given a contemptuous word. But the Testament was left when they brought me in. I am very sorry; still, many of its words are written on my heart, and I repeat them continually.

"This letter has taken hours to write. I fear it is very disjointed. My fingers are growing numbed; I fear I cannot re-write it if I would. It must serve. Thank you for all your kindness—for the last time. God make you a blessing to many, and grant that they do not disappoint as I have disappointed. Good-bye!"

With the letter was enclosed a brief note from a comrade telling how Garrett found death in seeking to save a wounded officer, and concluding—

"He had rescued several men previously: he seemed to have a charmed life, and was absolutely contemptuous of danger. We should certainly have voted him as deserving the V.C. had he lived. He was unconscious for some time before he died. His last articulate words, repeated over and over again as I sat by his bed, were, 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.'"

XII.

DECK-HAND MICHAEL REANEY.

It is a long while since my first introduction to Michael Reaney. He is a tall, gaunt fellow, with "the map of Ireland" drawn on his face, as he says, quite truly; but he goes wrong when he declares that he was ever prevented thereby from gaining an honest living. I do not believe that the police made that dead set against him which he imagines they did when he returned here on ticket-of-leave from a convict prison sixteen years ago. If he has not long continued since in one stay, it is, to my mind, due rather to the fact that his ambitious spirit chafes at such humdrum employment as he finds in normal times. But all my persuasions have failed to convince him that his misfortunes throughout these years are due to anything other than a police boycott.

He was sentenced to penal servitude before my time in the Court. As far as I can make out, the sentence was severe. Apart from being a reformative institution failure, he appears to have had no more against his character than two convictions for petty theft and half a score for drunkenness, when, at twenty-four years old, he was found guilty of larceny from the person of an acquaintance with whom he had been drinking in a tavern, and it was deemed expedient to pull

him up by a sharp sentence. I do not quarrel with the decision. I merely remark that Michael could point to many men who had done much worse and been more lightly treated: therefore he regarded himself as a special victim of the police.

I am aware that an enquiry was made at the works where he started labouring on release from penal servitude, and that the police officer who made the enquiry was hardly the wisest or most charitable officer attached to the force. But I had already told the employer what manner of man Michael was, and all the harm the enquiry did was to the constable who busied himself in making it unrequested by his superiors, who read him a severe lecture in consequence. The fact that Michael remained in that employment six months after the date of the enquiry, goes to prove that the song he sang for fourteen years to tell of the ill which came to him of it, was born of pure imagination.

In truth Michael is too ambitious. He aims at impossibilities. He has never realised the profound wisdom of the "Seekest thou great things for thyself: seek them not," although his experience should have taught him long since that it is not worth while. Because a man, down at the heel, chanced once to fall through an open grate into the cellar of a benevolent London merchant, finding that a way to fortune, Michael, if told of the incident, would be apt to look for an open grate, and to grumble because that road to success was barred to him from the mean custom of every proprietor of a likely house, who took care to have the grate secure. Michael has spent years in pursuing the unattainable, earning only disappointment where better judgment or better sense would have taught him to expect nothing else.

Going to prison for the eighteenth time, he learnt how application to visiting justices sometimes resulted in favoured offenders getting help on discharge. That such knowledge came to him so late in the day is a fact which I am quite unable to account for. Acting upon the motto, "Better late than never," he made an application, and was given permission to interview the justices.

Immediately preceding him was a first offender who was making application for working trousers and boots to fit him for a new start in employment on release. The request was cheerfully granted, and a little kindly advice given to the young fellow who preferred it. Michael's face shone as, buoyed up with another's success, he modestly asked for ten shillings, some underclothing, a working suit, and boots. Being told that help was not given in money, he substituted a topcoat for the ten shillings, and waited expectantly.

The Chairman enquired into his character. It was produced.

"Why," he exclaimed, startled at what was recorded, "you've been in prison eighteen times!"

After a few words with the other justices, he went on to express the unanimous conclusion, very curtly—

"Your application is refused."

Michael was so astonished that a warder had got him as far as the door before he recovered himself. Then he opened his mouth. Turning towards the Chairman, he complained—

"That's a nice thing: one fellow comes and axes for a pair o' boots first time he's here, and gets 'em like a shot. I've been here eighteen times afore I ax for aught, and then when I do ax I get naught. That's about a fair thing, isn't it! It's scandalous."

They marched him away. He was full of his

grievance when he reached me a few days later. But by then he had discovered a reason for his unfair treatment. It was due to the fact of his being a Roman Catholic and an Irishman, he said.

Wrong again: he could not justly be called either. He had described himself alternately as a Roman Catholic and a member of the Church of England during his prison career, so they would hardly reward or punish him for consistent loyalty to any religious body. In religion he was nothing. He was of Irish extraction, but his grandfather, settling here, married an English girl of seventeen, and his father, while taking an Irish lass to wife, was himself so much an Englishman as to have passed on to Michael not a syllable of the Irish brogue, merely the face and the name.

Michael's prison grievance did not impress me as he had hoped it would. I was used to him by that time. The number of situations I had introduced him to, and the various other means I had tried to give him a helping hand, impressed me much more. He was a failure. I knew not what to do with him.

There was much that I liked about the fellow. For a good while it had been my custom to send him up to my house to do odd jobs in the garden when otherwise disengaged. He went always most happily, greeting my wife with respectful but obvious pleasure, and remarking gratefully when dinner was served that it was "like coming home."

Our two children, boys of three and five years old at that time, were delighted with his visits, and never so happy as when permitted to share a picnic meal with him in the garden. Once my wife noticed especially the reverence of his attitude when our older boy, sobering down with his brother from force of training and habit, clasped his hands to say a simple grace before

dinner. There were big tears in Michael's eyes which he brushed away with a horny hand as he glanced towards my wife to say most feelingly, "Isn't it beautiful, mum?"

His manner and conversation with children were alike irreproachable. Our younger lad, a nervous, active, excitable child, "just like a bit of quicksilver" as Michael said, he made his special charge, never showing the least sign of annoyance at his hundred meddlesome actions, and hurrying after him the moment he missed the little thing, lest he should stray into some harm. There is no saying what might have been made of Michael if only it had been possible to keep him frequently in the society of children, who seemed to soften and ennoble his whole nature.

But ours is a little place, only capable of affording employment to a man for a very occasional day, and Michael was only there now and then for lack of something better to do. He worked like a slave for two shillings a day and his meals, with an odd cast-off garment thrown in sometimes; and he was perfectly happy. I think it was because of a gratified ambition. To somebody, to those two boys, he was precious, and they took no pains to conceal their admiration from him.

That, to my mind, was what he sought—admiration. He would work himself to death for that. But it must be forthcoming at once, and unstintedly; and few besides children are capable of fulfilling the conditions; so he mostly failed.

I think that was why he was a man much sought after by patrons of furniture auctions who desired to have purchases conveyed home by a porter. It was easy by the exercise of the considerable bodily strength he possessed, and his not contemptible ingenuity, to work marvels in the way of adding to the satisfaction of an already

well-pleased buyer, by rapidly taking home and skilfully arranging for admiration the piece of furniture bought at a cost which illustrated splendidly the purchaser's ability to secure a bargain. And Michael knew as well as anybody how to cry up the good points of a purchase, a gift which seldom failed to be of service when the question arose as to the sum suitable for presentation as reward for carrying home the arm-chair, or picture, or mirror.

Satisfactory earnings, and satisfaction expressed at his work; also the fact that auction sales, even in a populous centre, are not numerous enough to occupy all the hours of those who contrive to pick up a living as porters by attendance there, combined to render Michael more contented in this walk in life than he had been in any I had known him adopt before.

He had made many promising starts. I had been told by a full score employers after his first week's work that he was "a grand man." He was just showing them what he could do. Perhaps if they had seen fit to advance him instantly to a post as foreman he would have stayed and done well. But the gratification of these employers was expressed only to myself. They paid Michael his wages, and thought he would understand that because they made no complaint they were satisfied with him. It did not do for Michael. Appreciation was to him the very breath of life.

He was, indeed, much like men whom one has met with in quite other walks. He came to find misery and poverty and discontent his common lot, simply because he was not content to work and wait for that appreciation which all desire, but which comes only to few save after patient industry long continued.

The war awoke him to his better self. No longer content to idle about auction rooms, he

sought enlistment in the Army. He was forty-eight years old, and looked sixty, but his statement that he was thirty-five was not disputed. His left arm, broken once in a drunken brawl and ill set, and varicose veins in one leg, were responsible for his rejection. He came to me with a long face, wanting to do something for his country.

"You send lads to sea, don't you?" he enquired, observing that I was perplexed to know how he might be employed in patriotic work.

"Certainly," was my reply; "but you are rather an old boy, and know nothing about the sea. I'm afraid you'd be no use there."

"No use there," Michael repeated, evidently pitying my ignorance; "why, it's what I was brought up to! I was on a ship right along from when I was fourteen to three-and-twenty. There isn't a great deal about a ship that I don't know; and what there is as is new, I reckon I can learn it, like other folks has to do."

Here was an entirely new chapter in Michael's life. I questioned him closely. It seemed that he had been trained on a reformatory ship, had gone to sea with high hopes, and had served seven years on various vessels most creditably. Then promotion which he thought was due to him went to another; he resented being passed over, and abandoned life on sea to find misery and disappointment ashore.

Now that he was prepared to resume work as a seaman, there was no great difficulty in putting him in the way of helping Britain. It was merely a question of outfit and a ship. He went on board a tramp steamer four days later.

Mines were numerous in the North Sea when his ship crossed to Holland for the purpose of exchanging a cargo of coal for certain goods to be conveyed to a South American port. Michael's first letter made a passing reference to the danger,

but I forgot what he said about mines in my joy at finding him so well suited with his work. The letter was ill-penned, but the composition only required slight alterations to render it intelligible. Like most of my correspondents, Michael has a knack of allowing his character to be seen through his writing:—

"It's a long while since I handled such a thing, and a pen does feel little. It'll be five-and-twenty year since I wrote to anybody, and I've about forgot how. And I used to win prizes for writing when I was a lad! Well, that's a bit since, though. I expect as I shall make a nice bungle of it now.

"Well, it's like this here: I only wish I'd had sense enough to stick to the sea, for I've been more at home, like, since I got back than I've felt for five-and-twenty year. There aren't many men on this ship, and what there is is no good—only the captain, and he knows a good man when he sees one, and we're ever such pals. You see, the reason we've got such a lot of duds for sailors here is 'cos any fool and cripple can get a job on a ship now, men's that scarce. There isn't three hundred and fifty of 'em for every decent job, like there was when I was on a ship before. When things are like that kissing goes by favour, and often it's the biggest fools what's shoved into all the good jobs through being friends of captains.

"It wasn't my luck to get what was my due, never mind about no favours, when I went to sea as a lad. I expect they'd have worked me to death if I'd stopped. I wish I'd risked it, though, now. I might have had a ship of my own by this; and if I hadn't, I should have got one now, if I'd qualified for my papers: captain says so. He says I've been a big fool. He says there isn't a man

on the water as can beat me as things is, so what should I have been if I'd only stuck it out?

"When we were in the North Sea, going to Holland to pick up this cargo as we're taking to South America, after we'd left a bit of coal, you could see what they are as they call sailors now. They were everlasting looking out for mines, frightened to death of being blown up, as if we haven't all got to die sometime, and as if it matters whether we go by sea or land.

"When I come here and signed on as a deck-hand you wondered whether I should manage, didn't you, sir, being away from sea so long? Well, in about three hours they couldn't set me fast with any job, choose what it was. I was everybody's gaffer at a bit of hard work, and I'd raffled [ravelled] everything out as was newfangled about the ship—what puzzled me for a minute or two at first. And on top of that, there was nobody besides captain as could crow over me for seamanship. It had all come back. If I was a bit younger I'd go in for my papers, soft as it looks. I could get them easy; captain says so; I don't know but what I shall do, after all. It's many a long day since I felt as well as I do now. This life suits me down to the ground."

Returning to England when enemy submarines were busy in the Channel, he wrote:—

"I'm about fed up with most of our crew. They're not men; they're blooming sheep; they haven't as much pluck as a mouse.

"'Whatever's going to happen to us?' one of 'em said to me, all of a tremble, and his face as white as a ghost, when a submarine sent a shell after us as we were about getting home. That shell dropped a good mile astern. There was no need to be frightened. I says to him,

> Don't be so blooming white-livered; what is there to bother about? And I says to captain, I says, I'd better go and give 'em a hand in yon stokehold. He nodded, and I offed it to chuck coal into the furnace at about two ton a minute. We left that blooming submarine in fine style; and we'd only one man hit, and about two shillings' worth of damage done to the ship. It was all through me and captain, though; not one of t' others was a ha'porth of use. They was all ready to chuck up the sponge as soon as they saw a warship."*

It was evident from both these letters that Michael had been fortunate in finding a skipper who understood how to get the very best out of him. The captain's admiration, real or feigned, had that effect upon his character which I had noticed previously. Michael made three more voyages, and wrote me several letters, all extravagant in praise of himself and the captain. I was feeling, after he had spent a year at sea, that he was quite a changed character, when in October 1915 he paid me a surprise visit in more ways than one.

He was quite unexpected, he was much the worse for drink, and he declared that he "wouldn't set foot on a ship again for any man or any money."

Disappointed ambition once more: he had been served "the dirtiest trick as ever anybody was served." The captain had been transferred to a larger vessel while his own ship was docked for repairs; he had an opportunity of promoting Michael in recognition of his valuable services, yet he passed him over in favour of a stranger, "a relation," Michael thought, "who was a regular wastrel, no good nohow, as anybody with eyes could see for himself."

So Michael had come away, disdaining the offer of a berth similar to that he held on the other

ship; and it was not until he had got rid of a year's accumulated earnings that I was able to persuade him to try the sea again. Not that it took Michael as long to get rid of his money as most folk would have found necessary for the spending of sixty pounds. He managed the job in eight days. By pawning or selling goods bought in the height of his prosperity, say, from the first to the third day, he contrived to exist for a further week. Fifteen days after visiting me to declare that he had done with the sea, he was reduced to the necessity of coming to express anxiety to take to the life again if any skipper would have him.

There are few people I know who can eat humble pie more gracefully than Michael. It is always difficult to believe that he has had a chance in his life whensoever he comes pleading for help. Any stranger would believe that, given the most menial and laborious of tasks, so long only as it was possible to earn thereby bread to eat, raiment to put on, and the barest shelter, Michael would be content to discharge the same with gratitude while health and strength remained. It has been so from the day that I knew him. It was so when he called with his recantation in the matter of the oath which he had sworn against going any more to sea.

"It is all very well, Michael," I said in reply to his earnest plea for one more chance, "but I don't pick money up in the street, and I can't afford to spend it at the rate of seven pounds a day: that is a privilege which only millionaires like yourself can afford. Why should you expect me to pay your fare to Cardiff? You should have thought of that before. I can see nothing for you but the workhouse, and serve you right for your folly."

"It would," Michael agreed. "You're right there as usual; you're always right, sir. I've been a fool—a big fool and all. But only help me this

once more, and I won't bother you again as long as I live.

"It's all through that last captain of mine letting me down as he did as I've gone on like I have done. It wasn't very nice for me, now was it, sir? It would try any man's temper as is a man at all."

"Look here, Michael," I said, "I've told you many a time what's wrong with you. You can't 'stand corn.' You come whining when you're hard up, thankful to be permitted to live, and glad to take any job, no matter how hard or ill-paid. As soon as you get a start and begin to feel your feet you get 'swelled head' so badly there's no doing anything with you."

"That's right enough," Michael responded in deep humility; "I always do say as there isn't another man like yourself for sizing anybody up. But I'm not too old to learn sense. I'll stick to the next captain I get, no matter what shabby trick he serves me. Don't send me to the workhouse. It would kill me idling about there, when every man's wanted to serve his country. For the love of God, Mr Holmes, do give me another chance. Lend me my fare to Cardiff; it's more than it is to Hull, but I want to try my luck there this time. Lend me a sovereign, and I'll send it you back first pay I get."

Michael's credit was not good enough for a loan. It seeming best to make it possible for him to go to sea again, he was presented with a railway ticket for the port he had chosen, and also with an introduction to a skipper who could be trusted to deduct the expense of the journey from his pay.

Serving aboard a schooner which after a useful life had been laid aside till the demand for freights called her into activity again, Michael found himself entirely at home, everything about the boat being, in fact, exactly what he was used to in his early days at sea. The scratch crew aboard were

far from expert seamen; consequently within a fortnight Michael developed "swelled head" in alarming fashion. He was cured, at least temporarily, by the accidental dropping of a belaying-pin, described by the skipper thus:—

"That fellow, Michael; he's about come up to your picture of him. A hard worker, who knows all there is to know about a schooner; he is quite a useful hand. I took your hint and humoured him; so did the mate, till in about a week he reckoned he bossed the ship. That suited us very well, but the men didn't care for it overmuch.

"I'd sent one of them aloft to attend to a sail, and I was a bit curious for a minute to know what on earth he'd taken a belaying-pin up with him for. He soon let me know.

"Michael had got rather into the way of interfering, as I've said. He was watching the man, and singing out directions. The man waited till he was right over Michael. Then he let the belaying-pin drop, accidentally of course: he'd taken it up with him so as to have an accident. It fell plump on Michael's head, and felled him. He's all right again now, and the swelling that came out on top seems to have shifted the swelling from inside a bit. Of course the pair have had a fight; and, as I'm glad to say, Michael didn't win, he's singing rather low now."

Michael's brief note, received a week ago, goes to confirm the captain's impression that the accident was not all ill:—

"I'm sticking it out, sir, as I promised you I would do. They aren't a very agreeable lot of men on this boat; but we've all got to put up with things as we don't like. Let's all attend to what we can do best, I say, till our country's out of danger. That's what I'm going to do."

XIII.

SERGEANT-MAJOR JAMES.

"In appearance strikingly resembling Mr Balfour as he was when I used to see him almost daily for a few weeks, about thirty years ago."

Such was the very accurate description of Sergeant-Major James offered last December by one who was keenly interested in him, and who called on me seeking to know if I could tell his whereabouts.

At the moment I could tell no more than that he had written last from somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea, but by a strange coincidence I had this letter from him the very next morning:—

> "When the Apostle heard the man of Macedonia pray 'Come over and help us,' I wonder if he had any idea what sort of God-forsaken land he was being invited to. No wonder they put Paul and Silas in prison as reward for their kindness in trying to do them a good turn. As for such coward's work as turning on the men they had enticed over, persecuting them, and scourging them with rods because the results of their visit looked like being financially disappointing, that would suit the gentry of Macedonia to a T. And the abject craving that the Apostle and his companion would go quietly away and say nothing

about the matter, when these heroic persecutors found that they, by blundering, had risked their own precious skins; that would be entirely characteristic.

"I can see it all. For their lineal descendants to-day are living up to the fine old traditions of their race. Cunning and knavish as becomes a race peerless for all the damnable traits in human nature, they sit on the fence huckstering, 'too proud to fight,' like another race I wot of, but not too proud to make the best bargain they can out of the blood of men, the worst a hundred million times their betters. They are thieving, lying, dirty, cowardly hypocrites of the very first water. Damn the whole Balkan population, I say. It is a pity England propped up their miserable countries so long. They are not worth it. Let them get at one another's throats. Let the most pitiful lot of self-seeking, devilish skunks outside hell, get back inside to their Father, and be at rest. In common charity, that is my fervent desire. But I am getting warm. I will change the subject. Let me try to describe the geography, leaving out of count the hopeless devils who cumber the ground.

"Salonica is, you will remember, the ancient Therma. It was the resting-place of Xerxes on his march; it is not unmentioned in the Peloponnesian war; and it was a frequent subject of debate in the last independent assemblies of Athens. When the Macedonian power began to overshadow all the countries where Greek was spoken, the city received its new name of Thessalonica, after a sister of Alexander the Great. The Salneck of the early German poets has become the Salonica of the modern Levant, otherwise its name remains unchanged to the present day.

"We landed at Salonica for various reasons, not all of them known to ourselves here. I will hazard a guess at the most important one, from the position and history of the place.

"Its situation on the inner bend of the Thermaic Gulf—half-way between the Adriatic and the Hellespont—on the sea-margin of a vast plain watered by several rivers—at the entrance of the pass which commands the approach to the other great Macedonian level—gives the reason for its pre-eminence from the day of its choice as metropolis when the four Macedonian divisions of Paulus Æmilius were united into one Roman province, right through the middle ages, and on to our own era. There probably never was a time, from the day when it first received its name, that this city, as viewed from the sea, had not the aspect of a busy commercial centre. The presence of a hundred great transports of the Allies, and of their protecting warships, adds tremendously to the lively aspect of the scene to-day, no doubt, but it must always have been one of considerable activity.

"Approaching the place by sea, up the Gulf of Salonica, one sees a region bounded by a semicircle of mountains, beyond which the streams flow westward to the Adriatic, or northward and eastward to the Danube and the Euxine. This mountain barrier sends down branches to the sea on the eastern or Thracian frontier; and on the south shuts out the plain of Thessaly, and rises near the shore to the high summits of Pelion, Ossa, and the snowy Olympus. The space thus enclosed is intersected by two great rivers. One of these is Homer's 'wide-flowing Axius.' The other is the Strymon, which brings the produce of the great inland level of Serres to the sea.

Between the mouths of these two rivers a remarkable tract of country, which is insular rather than continental, projects into the Archipelago, and divides itself into three points, on the furthest of which Mount Athos rises nearly to the region of perpetual snow. Although this interesting bit of classic ground could not be seen in our voyage up the gulf, I hope our gunboats are scouring its ancient waters, for, to my mind, they are likely haunts for enemy submarines.

"What concerns soldiers most is to make haste to fortify Salonica. It matters not a sand grain what the Greeks say. Their one patriot was right in inviting us here. We were ten times more right in accepting the invitation. Give us a month's preparation, properly used, and all the devils in the central countries, and all their guns, cannot move us. In my judgment this is about the best card we have played so far. There will be much growling on the part of the Huns—and maybe a note or two from brother Jonathan. But no treaty obligation would have kept the Central Powers away from here had not we forestalled them. I am perfectly sure of that. It is well for them to have the pleasure of moving trespassers for once. They will have cause to remember the task. For my instinct tells me we shall have time to prepare a warm reception for them.

"We are here ostensibly to help Serbia. We shall do our best in that direction, of course. But we are, in my opinion, a month too late for that. Our better plan will be to make that stronghold of the place which Salonica, from its geographical peculiarities, so easily can be made.

"At any rate, that is what I am hoping will

be done while I am away with my battalion on the forlorn hope of aiding Serbia. Perhaps I want Britain to take root here out of pure spite, since the countrymen of him who invited us have treated us with every discourtesy known to a people whose manners would cause the worst-bred hog trying its hardest to be offensive to hide its head in humiliation and shame. But I think I have too much sense to trouble about vermin of this sort. Rather it is because I see the possibilities of the region, numskull that I am, that I make sure wiser folk than I have seen the same, and that we shall take lasting possession of a military position too valuable to trust to the defence of a population who would sell their very soul for gain, and too attractive a magnet for the enemy to keep away from except by fear of annihilation.

"There, I have done for the present. I said I would tell you something about the country when I got here, not knowing for certain what the country was. It is all the pleasanter to find oneself on classic ground, where all seems familiar except the modern names, not worth troubling to learn, since the map is about to be redrawn, and a good many places I hear named to-day will be dead and damned to-morrow.

"Since you are kind enough to ask what I most require, I should be infinitely obliged by the gift of a thin diary, a page a day; I was always a ready writer (and an execrable penman), and less than that amount of space is no good. You shall have the thing when full — if *I live* to fill it. If these bastard Greeks stay here and do not mend their manners, I fear there will be much lurid language to tone down before my literary

work will be fit for family perusal; but such as it is you will be heartily welcome to it. It is pleasing to know that you appreciate my former scrawls. I had rather you make no further reference to my supposed literary ability. What is past is past. Let us say no more about it. Good-bye.".

I first met with James in March 1913. He was in as pitiable a state as any mortal can well occupy. Ill, homeless, destitute, without domicile, he was wandering from place to place, occupying the casual ward first of one workhouse then another, to be turned out when morning came to seek similar shelter, grudgingly given elsewhere only for one night at a time.

No doubt it is necessary for the Guardians of the Poor to keep a close watch, lest the ratepayers of one Union should be saddled with expenses properly belonging to another. They are willing, nay anxious, that the best medical aid shall be given to the sick and needy under their guardianship, and they will extend ready hospitality, temporarily, to afflicted persons chargeable to other places, rectifying matters in due course with the authorities responsible. But they are very chary of accepting any case in which a sick man cannot prove domicile anywhere, lest they should gratuitously saddle ratepayers with a possibly heavy burden, long to be borne, and legally none of theirs.

And so it comes about now and then that a homeless tramp dies by the wayside, having sought in vain for a roof under which to sigh out his wasted life. Perhaps James's ill-health was unnoticed in the casual ward where last he slept; perhaps officialdom, grown callous, knew, but did not care. I do not labour the point. I do not say that it is anything other than infrequent for such a thing to occur. Neither am I

forgetting grave difficulties. Illness is often pretended by worthless beings seeking to secure a period of idle ease. All I am saying is that men do die, now and then, under the conditions set out, and that James came near to being of their number.

He was the younger son of a country clergyman. After a brilliant career at Oxford he became an assistant-master in a private school, the intention being that a year later he should, at twenty-three, take deacon's orders. Unfortunately, within three months he became hopelessly entangled with the daughter of an unscrupulous promoter of bogus companies who resided not far away from the school premises. He was caused to believe that he would find more lucrative employment by adopting a calling similar to that of the girl's father, and he relinquished the scholastic profession and dreams of the Church at one step, thereby earning the strong condemnation of his own people, who, not unnaturally, looked upon his conduct as that of a fool.

I was never informed how it all came round: James was very secretive about the matter. It would seem, by the little he told me, that he was used by the girl's father as a cat's-paw. Anyhow, three years courtship was followed by a similar period of penal servitude for being concerned in some great swindle, and he came out of prison to find that the girl had married in the meantime, and that her prosperous father had nothing for him save threatening and bitter words.

For some reason he appears to have depended upon assistance from that individual, and his refusal to have further dealings with him caused James to utterly despair. He had completely cut himself off from his own people long before sentence was passed upon him for felony. He did not even know whether they had learned of his

disgrace or not. It was not natural that he should willingly turn to them now. Instead, he tried to forget his troubles in hard drinking so long as he had a penny, or a possession capable of being turned into money.

Then began his aimless wanderings from place to place which finally brought him here. Suffering from pneumonia he was turned out of a casual ward one bleak March morning, and somebody sent him to me. Seeing that he appeared very ill I took him to a doctor, who, with the proverbial generosity of the profession, thoroughly examined the patient, arranged for his reception in the workhouse hospital forthwith, and forcibly expressed annoyance at my request to be informed as to the amount of his fee, which was, of course, nothing.

James narrowly escaped death. When he at length recovered, he was full of praise of the treatment he had received. The praise was well deserved. Doctors and nurses alike had given him most painstaking and kind attention. Possibly they recognised in him an unusually appreciative patient. If that were so the regard would be reciprocal; but it is due to the staff to state that kindly attention is given in that hospital alike to the grateful and the churlish.

His one anxiety was concerning what would become of him on his discharge. When I visited him we discussed the matter, but it was not easy to see an opening for the exercise of such talents as he possessed. His real vocation seemed to be the teacher's. But he had not followed that, and added to his lack of experience was the insurmountable difficulty of his imprisonment. Nobody desires that his son shall be taught by an ex-convict. I suggested a rough sort of clerkship, but he smiled incredulously.

"Just see my fist," he remarked, producing speci-

mens of his handwriting from a pocket-book in his locker; "it would have to be rough, wouldn't it," he went on, as he noticed how my face had fallen.

I think he wrote the very worst hand I ever saw. There seemed nothing for him but work as a labourer, and I told him so, not without hesitation, for I felt he merited a better chance in life.

"Can you get me in as a labourer anywhere?" he enquired incredulously.

I said that I thought I could.

"Well, if you can, that settles it; give me your hand, sir, you're a brick!" he exclaimed, delighted, and he grasped my hand in a way which proved that he would be none too weak for manual labour when quite recovered.

It was not a heavy job that a friend put him to, cleaning small castings in an iron foundry. He worked well, too, never grumbling on being asked to stay an extra hour, or on occasionally being given harder work than was customary.

I worried him persistently with a view to getting him to attend church. It was to please me, I fear, that, clad in a decent suit, he set out one Sunday with that object.

I know quite well what he would look like—just an ordinary working man with a particularly intellectual face. Unfortunately he chose a church where half the seats are appropriated—that half being on that side of the building to which a stranger would naturally go.

"Wouldn't it be well to tackle the parsons and the regular members of their flocks before urging men to go to church?" he asked me when next I saw him.

"I tried to make a new start last Sunday morning," he went on, naming the church he attended; "I'll give the verger his due; he was out of the way when I took my seat, and when he saw me

he had the decency to wait till I rose from my knees. It was not he who was responsible. He was merely carrying out instructions when he came to me and enquired quite politely if I was a seat-holder.

"Of course I told him I was not. Then he asked me if I minded crossing to the other side of the church. But for his politeness I should have gone out. Being the decent fellow he was, I would not hurt his feelings. So I did as he suggested.

"You may guess how much that service helped me, especially as I noticed that not a soul came to occupy the pew the verger dared not allow me to use.

"I felt so strongly about it that I waited outside the church to see the vicar when the service was over. He approached me in the company of two curates who had assisted in the service. When he saw me moving towards them, he said to the taller of the curates, quite audibly, and with what I regarded as a ring of impatient contempt in his tone—

"'See this fellow, will you; I expect he's on the beg,' and stalked off.

"I gave that curate a piece of my mind, not all; for the man who most needed a lecture had gone. Still the curate was an apt pupil of his master, and I gave him a doze calculated to do him good.

"My determination was to have nothing more to do with church-going thenceforward for ever. I went back to my lodging in a rage. But during the wet, dreary afternoon I got tired of being indoors, and I thought of the public-house—then I thought of you. It was evident that I could not remain in the house all the evening, and it was therefore public-house or church, with a strong leaning to the former, when the thought of you banged the scale down in favour of church.

"With that strangeness so often to be observed, the landlady told me when I had tea that 'a great

preacher, a distinguished stranger,' was to occupy the pulpit of the very church I had attended in the morning. I had often heard his name, and I was seized with curiosity to listen to his eloquence. So I went there again.

"The unappropriated seats were all crowded when I reached the church. The kindly verger told me he would secure me a seat on the appropriated side in ten minutes, 'when the bells stop,' as he said. It was really decent of him. I waited in quite a happy frame of mind in consequence; and sure enough the good fellow put me in a comfortable seat as soon as he had the opportunity.

"But I was still on my knees when I was tapped on the shoulder. Looking up, I saw a haughty, overdressed woman glaring angrily at me.

"'You're in my seat,' she hissed.

"The poor verger was looking on, helpless. Angry as I was, I felt quite sorry for him as I turned out.

"'It's a shame,' he whispered; 'it's fair sickening such goings on.'

"He was so cut up, indeed, that I stayed rather than add to his mortification.

"The choir and clergy now came in in grave procession. But I will not weary you with a description of the service. It was reverently taken, and the rendering of the music was beautiful, if one could have got away from the feeling that it was all an unconscious mockery.

"The first psalm, for instance—

"'Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy, the Lord shall deliver him in time of trouble,' was certainly sung at my elbow, standing there in the aisle, with great unction by the woman who had turned me out of the seat; and no doubt the vicar who had treated me so charitably earlier in the day, and who was prominent in the procession at the beginning of the service, was equally diligent in trolling out the words.

"Then, to rub it in, the anthem was taken from that very passage, and the preacher must needs show how little he knew about the poor, for all his eloquence, when he came to handle the same text.

"'You'll find a welcome at the mission hall,' the verger said when I came away: 'I used to be a lot more comfortable there; but I took this job on, and they're a starchy lot here.'

"It was good of him. But I'd had enough of religion for the moment. I'm sorry; but I'll try the free library next Sunday. Please don't press me. I really can't stand church any more just now. I may come round to it again, but not yet."

He tried the free library and found it a failure. In his own words—

"It's the rendezvous of all the idlers of the place who are too poor or too mean to patronise a public-house. They take possession of the best seats and the best magazines, and get glued to them. And their stench is abominable."

So he found his way to the public-house in spite of all my efforts and of his own genuine desire to do as I wished. I soon learned from his employer that he was drinking heavily.

To check him I urged him to allow me to lend him some books. His excellent landlady seconded my efforts admirably, making his room most comfortable and inviting on his return from work day by day, and when he came downstairs on Sundays. This did great good. For quite twelve months he kept moderately sober. Then he "seemed to mope a bit," as his landlady said, and followed that by a carousal which landed him into the hands of the police.

He was fined, and returned to his work, privileged to discharge the fine by instalments. But the war broke out the same day, and by the end of the week he was a private in the Army.

His education, and his strict attention to duty,

marked him out for rapid promotion. Few men have rendered better service in training raw recruits than he. Indeed his very success in this work caused him innumerable disappointments. Many a time he wrote to tell me that he hoped to go out with battalion or draft, only to find that his services at home were considered as too valuable to be spared.

He was greatly delighted when his chance did come, and, as he states in the letter I have given, he promised to send me a description of scenes and countries which he might visit. I had already found that he was an admirable letter-writer, and regretted that I was so late in discovering his literary ability. His note about a suggestion of mine that he might find scope for his talent on his return to civil life is characteristic. Ambition was dead within him. The iron had bit deep into his soul. His promotion in the army was something as unavoidable as it was utterly unsought.

I chanced to mention the story of James's career to a clergyman of my acquaintance. He in turn told it to a friend. The friend passed it on. In due course I received a visit from the aged rector of a country parish who had a son of similar age, and of similar appearance so far as could be judged from comparing a photograph of James taken in prison some five years earlier, with one of the rector's son taken in his undergraduate days of twelve years ago. To assist in a description, the rector also compared his son's appearance with that of Mr Balfour as he was thirty years ago.

The likeness was so striking that I procured the official records, and found that the name of James, which I had all along known to be an alias, but which served well enough, covered the name of the rector's son.

"We heard nothing of him," his father said, "after his brother and myself had each written to him, strongly protesting against his proposal

to forsake the profession for which he was being trained. It was a shock to me when I felt that the man you had described was certainly he; for I had never thought of him as sinking so low until the similarity of my boy's career with the one you had told me of struck me irresistibly. Fortunately his mother is gone, and his only brother;—he went from service in Flanders—a gallant officer, who died as gallantly as any. His sister, who dotes upon him still, as she always did, which is natural enough, seeing that she is many years his senior, and mothered him in his mother's frequent illnesses—she has got over the feeling of disgrace, as I have; if we ever really felt any disgrace. I do not know that we did. It is very strange. I used to hold the idea that a convict was loathsome to a degree. That was because none of my flesh and blood were ever that to my knowledge. Now that my son is of their number, convicts seem lovable and human enough.

"But you weary of an old man's babbling. This has been a terrible but most needful lesson to me. I have learnt very much from it which I would I had learnt earlier. Then had my preaching of the Gospel been of a different sort these eight-and-forty years. I see now quite plainly things that were dark and mysterious before.

"I see what a difference it makes in one's view of a class when one's own son belongs to it. I see also, as I never saw before, that God Almighty loves every savage of our tribe—a tribe His own Son joined, and for which He gave Himself. It comes right home, that awful denunciation through Isaiah: 'Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.' For I am of that number who have prized the shell while throwing aside the kernel of Christianity.

"I have trod the weary round of religious observances, and I have done little else: meanwhile my own son, lost, as I well knew—I left it for a stranger to give comfort and help to him. I dare not think what I might have said or done had he come, a weary vagrant, to my door when he came to you three years ago. For I had my other son then. And it is possible that I should have looked upon poor Benny with an evil eye, as having stamped himself with a mark I could by no means bear.

"He did not come to me. He came to you. It was God's will. He knew best. But when the lad sets foot again in England he must come straight to his father's home. Now, take an old clergyman's blessing for what you have done, give me my boy's address, and I will cease to weary you."

He went his way. I sent him the letter I had from his son the next day, after taking a copy. He replied by another visit a week later.

There he stood at my table, declining a chair, seeing that I was about to go out when he called, and was too courteous to hinder me; a tall, intellectual, clean-shaven clergyman of the old school, past seventy years old, but healthy, vigorous, and keen, his eyes twinkling in merry acquiescence in his lad's poor opinion of the Balkan peoples, and changing to admiration as the letter we talked of proceeded to describe the geography of Macedonia.

"I wrote to him the night of the day I saw you last," he said to me; "and I wrote again when I got your note with its precious enclosure. I shall look anxiously for every post when six weeks or so have gone. But how those six weeks will drag, to be sure!"

I had given him on his previous visit all the letters which had been sent me by his son, so that he might take them away for perusal at

his leisure. He now timidly asked if he might retain them a little longer, and went away overjoyed on being told that I wished him to keep them always.

In a little while the Sergeant-Major sent another letter telling of his safe return from the futile effort to relieve the Serbians, and adding confirmation to his poor opinion of the Balkan peoples, already strongly expressed. Then, after the former manner, he passed on to geography, describing the country he had passed through thus:—

> "The scenery recalls the remembrance of Killiecrankie in Scotland and Dovedale in Derbyshire, but is upon a vastly grander scale. Ledges of the cliffs are covered with wood, and wherever space is afforded by the water-side, ivy-clad planes, oaks, and other forest trees appear of the most remarkable size, which throw their branches over the river, and at intervals, when in foliage, must almost hide it from view. But our own experience of the region has resembled that of Ovid, who—I write from memory, of course—speaks of it something like this: 'The snow lies deep; and as it lies neither sun nor rain can melt it. Boreas hardens it, and makes it endure for ever. Hence, when the former ice has not yet melted, fresh succeeds, and in many a place it is wont to last for two years.'
>
> "Imagine the difficulties of campaigning here, and the terrors endured by the fugitives who keep straggling in from Monastir. Some British nurses arrived quite lately. God knows how they had endured that long agonising tramp across ice-fields, in snow-drifts feet deep, along tortuous valleys and over high mountain passes. Hundreds of Serbian fugitives perished miserably of want and

cold by the way. God pity Wilhelm. I could be sorry for the devil had he half to answer for that this man has!"

I passed this strange letter to the aged father, who thanked me warmly for it by return of post. A fortnight later I had another to send him. It ran thus:—

"How little we know about ourselves! I have been thinking about these abjects here—these spies of every Balkan people, who, having received their very life at Britain's hand, are still ready to vie with each other for the shameful distinction of acting as her betrayer. And while I was thinking, sadly enough, my mind, like an open place, open to all the winds, now one thing and now another blowing in through the empty room, like straws or like falling leaves, or like rain or quickly melting snow, I began to sing to the self-same chant they used there to that self-same psalm I heard last in that church where a certain Christian woman spurned from her pew the stranger who had dared to pollute it with his presence: 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy, the Lord shall deliver him in time of trouble.'

"Then, instantly, I went off to 'Tipperary,' then to 'Rule Britannia'; and then, to what has left a deep impression, 'When I survey the wondrous cross.' Whence comes these wandering thoughts? What is the use of them, or is there any use in them? Why these contradictions, these mixtures of somethings, of nothings? Are they the slight manifestations of a perpetual warfare raging within us? I think so. For as I half-unconsciously hummed 'Rockingham,' the tune, rather than the words of the famous hymn, there appeared before me, not a vision of Christ's person, but of the meaning of that

most glorious crown of thorns He wore. The King of Heaven, the Prince of Peace, is a man—He took not upon Him the nature of angels. That would have been easy but futile. It would not have linked Him with us closely enough. So my vision told me. He must needs suffer for us. He must needs buy us with His own blood. And that wondrous crown, marring the kindest face this world ever saw from one point of view, becomes from another the diadem which One alone of all who have borne the human name is worthy to wear.

"And if suffering, and forgiveness, and love of our fellows, and general self-forgetfulness be what is required of every one of us, how greatly we all stand in need of His atonement!

"That was the lasting impression of my vision: but, subsidiary, there was another. I felt, for a moment, a sense of divine spectatorship, companionship, as if there was but God in the world besides me; and God, all-seeing, all-understanding, with whom no words were necessary. Was it like that that Nathanael sat under his fig-tree, feeling God around him in the silence, so that it needed only our Lord's reminder of it to assure him that this was his Lord and his God?

"Like a mother or a tender nurse, but not the most anxious human watcher, infinitely beyond her in power to divine your wish in your eyes before it is fully formed, there is One looking on Who sees and is aware. It is a bleeding Hand that stretches out to help him who pierced it, and in the very act of stretching out does away with all need of explanation, and ends all separation."

There were no further letters. Whether his father's reached him is uncertain. About the time they were due to be delivered he was cut

off in some miserable affair of patrols or some ambuscade, not in the heat and glory of a fierce engagement such as seems to lend dignity to a soldier's dying.

The message which told me the news of his end was this:—

> "The Sergeant-Major asked me to let you know if anything happened him. He was killed last week. We were surprised by the enemy. The shots rang out, and, as I stood beside him, he gave a little sob and fell. I knelt down, but he never spoke. They are sending his belongings to his father as soon as they can get them together. I am sorry I have no better news to send you. It has made us all feel seedy. He was strict, but he was just, and a rare good pal for all he was so much better educated than any of us; a bit silent, so to speak, but that was natural. He would have been more with his own sort in the officers' mess."

So that was the conclusion, and I could not bring myself to write of it to the aged father. He must be told, if possible before the official intimation came. I set off to the rectory by the first available train.

I was not too late to be that bearer of evil tidings first to break the news, thanks only to the fact that no afternoon delivery of letters was made in that village; for an intimation sent by the authorities came down by the very mail which brought my own letter, and I had the advantage of town postal arrangements.

The old clergyman welcomed me in his study with a pleasant smile that cut me to the quick, realising as I did that I must turn his joy to heaviness. His daughter, one of the sweetest women I ever saw, grown prematurely grey from the anxious care of an ailing mother, which was but transferred to her father when the mother

went where care can be no more, intuitively guessed my errand and followed me into the room.

"Let me introduce you to Benny's good friend, my dear," the old man said, gratitude in every look and word.

I do not know how I told my story. It was a heavy task; but it was done at last, and the father seemed only gradually to take in the full depth of the tragedy that had befallen; which I was most thankful to observe.

"You won't mind if I go and rest a bit," he said presently; "thank you for your goodness in coming to tell me, and especially for your kindness in reminding me of what he said in that last letter. It is grievous, very grievous; but it has all happened to others. All must bear their share. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'"

He was manifestly pouring out his soul before a higher Presence, and with a sweet submissiveness that thrilled me and filled my eyes with tears. His resignation was expressed in tones as calm and natural, in their degree, and considering the awful difference between the beings addressed, as those which he resumed when he again turned to me to say—

"You will stay and have tea. Perhaps I shall be feeling well enough to join you again soon. I am feeling just a little faint, and also, I want to be alone. You will understand. Lest I should not see you before you go, I will say good-bye."

He had risen from his chair at his desk and come to where I was. His daughter stood beside him, tenderly watching over him through her tears.

He turned to her as he let go my hand.

"Look after him, Eleanor," he said; "see that he doesn't slip off without a little refreshment. It's a long way to the station, and he won't ride."

He paused to pick up the letter I had brought with me. He tried to read it, but his tears blinded him, and his whole frame shook with emotion. His daughter readily understood that while I had no need of tea, he had great need of her.

"Come, father," she said, gently taking his arm, and bowing me a grave farewell; "you're very tired. You'll feel ever so much better for a little rest."

"I will go, dear," he assented. He passed out of the room and upstairs, holding the letter in his hand, and talking to his daughter as they went.

"Poor Benny," he murmured; "never coming back! Poor Benny, my poor lad, your poor brother; it's a heavy blow, Eleanor, for us both."

"Don't grieve, father," she whispered tenderly; "remember he's quite safe now in the company of his great Captain, the Wearer of that most glorious crown of thorns he spoke of. And *he*, also, died for others—for England."

"Yes, dear, for England," he sobbed; "but I am very rebellious. Oh, Benny, my poor Benny; would that you had been spared to return. Would that I could have gone instead!"

"Blowing in through the empty room" of my mind as I write comes the recollection of words telling of the agony of another father. They will bear printing again — for the thousand millionth time. Nothing more true has been found through all the ages; no words more poignantly expressing the wringings of a thousand parents' breaking hearts in Britain to-day:—

"And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

XIV.

WALTER GREENWAY, SPY.

THEY had told me that I should make nothing of him. I saw him merely as a matter of routine in the cell he occupied at the police station before being brought before the Court on a charge of burglariously entering certain premises with intent to commit a felony. It seemed good to me to endeavour to gather some particulars concerning the antecedents and mode of life of a stranger in our midst, so that I might be in a position to judge what it was possible to do to help him, should the charge be dismissed, or should he elect to come to me for a new start when released from prison, if convicted and sentenced.

They had understated the truth. I made less than nothing of him. I went into the cell to interview a man whom I was told was deaf and dumb. He was a small, lithe, pleasant-faced, swarthy-complexioned, active-looking fellow, with great, dreamy, dark eyes, about thirty years of age, suspiciously intelligent in appearance, to my mind, for a mute. He was decently clad, and I could not make out how he had found it possible to maintain himself in fair prosperity, being, as he gave the police to understand, unable to read or write, and failing to comprehend both their amateurish efforts at talking with the fingers and my own. I left him with an uncomfortable feel-

ing that I was possibly doing an afflicted mortal an injustice, yet unable to agree that he was deaf and dumb at all.

When he got into Court, a nameless offender, he was seen by the capable instructor of our local mutes, who worked hard but vainly before the hearing of the case in a strenuous effort to make something of him. The case was called on with success still far away.

"You're going to interpret for us," the Magistrate remarked in pleasant courtesy as a greeting to the instructor, who looked perplexed, but silently consented to make a further attempt.

The Clerk of the Court read the charge over. The interpreter's fingers worked with marvellous rapidity, and now and then he clenched his right hand and brought it into sharp and loud contact with his open left palm. The offender gazed at him with mild interest at first, but obviously failed to comprehend what it was all about. The interpreter slowed down, and went through the same performance at quarter speed. The accused's interest faded; he followed the proceedings with evident languor, yawning before the end was reached.

"He doesn't appear to know anything of the deaf and dumb language, your worship," the interpreter concluded; "I tried, before Court, to make him comprehend me, but I couldn't. I scarcely think the man is deaf and dumb. He would know some of the signs if he were. He is intelligent, and he must have had some way of making himself understood."

The Magistrate thought so too. It was plain that the case could not proceed until all doubt was solved regarding the accused's ability to follow it. He was remanded for three days.

The police forgot to give him his dinner that day, and at tea-time, and supper-time also, he was

overlooked. He made a lot of noise, kicking and rattling to call attention to official forgetfulness. But they were dull persons, and failed to take in what he would have them understand. They went to his cell time and again. He opened his mouth wide, frantically pushing his fingers therein, and swallowing energetically. They lugged a four-gallon bucket filled with water into his cell, provided a tin mug, and indicated that he was welcome to drink his fill. He shook his head till it looked likely to fall off. They stared at him as if entirely mystified, and went their way once more.

He resumed his signals of distress. The relief came on duty, and heard him, but were advised by their departing colleagues to "let him be"; so he continued kicking and knocking till midnight. Then his efforts grew so violent that an officer went up to him. He repeated the opening of his mouth, the putting of fingers therein, and the imaginary gulping. The officer repeated the bucket trick. He waved his arms in violent dissent. The constable had an inspiration, the arms waving in the direction of the heap of rugs put on the plank bed for the man's covering in the night.

"Oh, I see; that's what's bothering you is it," he remarked; "well, they're not lousy, then; but they can be shifted if they're in your road." He gathered the rugs in his arms, and departed from the cell, slamming the door after him.

It was a stupid sort of thing to do, for there was nothing at all in the poor man's gesticulations suggestive of a complaint that the blankets were alive. No wonder the dumb spake at such treatment. To be denied food was hard enough; to be left, in addition, without bed-covering, was intolerable.

"I say, you damned fool," shouted an alarmed, stentorian voice after the officer, "you're not

taking those blankets away, are you? I shall be starved to death. Bring 'em back, and let's have something to eat. I've not had a bite since breakfast, at eight this morning."

The constable heard the voice distinctly through the thickness of the door, and above the sound of his own heavy footsteps. He was startled, but he turned back and entered the cell again.

"Oh," he said, "you've found your tongue, have you? I thought we should be curing your complaint in time. Now let's have your name, and a few particulars about you. Then you can have your bedclothes back if your answers are all right, and happen a bit of some'at to eat besides."

He collapsed into docile obedience at that. His name, he said, was Walter Greenway, his age twenty-nine years, his home in a neighbouring town, his occupation that of a clerk; he was single, and he lived at the house of his father, a retired chemist of some small means. These particulars the police saw no reason to doubt; accordingly the bedding was restored, supper provided, and matters at the station settled down to normal.

"What made you pretend to be deaf and dumb when before the Court last Monday?" the Magistrate enquired on taking up the case again after remand; "you put people to a lot of trouble. What caused you to act so foolishly?"

"I didn't want my people dragged in," he muttered; "that was why, sir." It was a melancholy lie; the police knew by this time what sort of record he had; his father had tired of helping him long before. He had never scrupled to bring his people in so long as there was the least prospect of their helping him. Whatever was responsible for his whim to pose as a deaf mute, it was not what he stated. The case went on; in due course it reached the Court of Assize.

Full particulars of his career were revealed there. He had received an excellent education, and was a well-trained and most capable clerk, with an uncommonly good knowledge of foreign languages—it being said, for example, that he spoke and wrote German like a native. It was plain that he had taken to a life of crime of deliberate choice: there was no earthly reason why he should not have done well in his proper calling; he got into mischief out of pure love of it.

"He can climb like a cat," a detective informed me, not without admiration; "and the way he runs along house-tops from one end of a long row to the other, as easy as you and me walk on the streets, it's a sight to see. I tell you, sir, it's right down exciting work trying to catch him. He'll slip down from a roof by a fall-pipe two hundred yards farther on than where you could swear he's time to be. And, as you're not expecting him anywhere there, there'd be no catching him if he wasn't such a fool as to come peeping round where you are, just for the fun of seeing you baffled. That's what's done him every time."

Every time meant nine times: such was the number of convictions recorded against him, all for similar offences. He was a total abstainer and a non-smoker; he was not a gambler; his one vice was burglary, and he did not appear to have made any serious attempt to settle down to his proper employment as a corresponding clerk, since he first exchanged the desk for the house-top—he entered premises always by an attic window—at twenty-five years old. By the accident of habitually appearing before a lenient judge, he had escaped sentence of penal servitude hitherto, as he escaped it now, being once more committed to hard labour.

"Send me somewhere right away," he begged of

me on release; "my people want to have no more to do with me; the Chaplain tried them all, saying a good deal better of me than I deserved; I knew he was overdoing the thing, and they'd see through it. It was all because I translated some theological stuff for him from the German that he made up his mind what a lot my people ought to do for such an ornament of the family. But it didn't impress them. They know me such a lot better than his reverence does. I don't blame them. They've given me many a fair innings, and I've never scored a run for them yet. It's against common-sense that they should have me back in the family team."

"So you can play cricket," I remarked, "as well as do a good deal else in the way of accomplishments. What is there exactly that you haven't had a try at? They tell me that in prison you've been bookbinder, clerk, printer, painter, even steeple-Jack, which would do very well, I should say. Out of prison you've been foreign correspondent, human cat, burglar, cricketer, deaf mute, and I don't know what else. How came you to play the deaf mute, by the way?"

"Just a whim, sir—to baffle the authorities a bit, and for sport; that was all," he answered with a grin. Then he went on—

"It may sound strange, but it's absolutely true: I can't resist an attic window. Wherever I go, my eyes naturally turn upwards. I notice how careless most people are with their upper windows, and I feel just bound to show them they are mistaken in their view that nobody can get in there. It's a case of being ruined by one's gifts, if you like; taking a pride in being able, as the police say, 'to run up a pipe and play about on a roof, like a cat.' I shall never do any good where there are houses with attics, or with any other sort of upper storey.

"I should be out of all temptation on a sailing ship. I could climb the rigging, and do no harm to anybody. Or an Indian wigwam village might do, or a Bedouin encampment,—no attics there, I understand.

"The Chaplain told no more than the truth, though my people could not be expected to believe it, when he described my angelic conduct in prison. I'm quite a cherub there. They mostly give me a bit of climbing—painting spouts, or, sometimes, even attending to the coping of a tall chimney, and the recreation keeps me straight; besides, the top windows are barred like the rest, and beyond me anyhow.

"Send me somewhere out of the country, to sea for choice; I shall be at my accomplishments, as you call them, again, if I stay in a civilised community."

He was a strange person. Apart from his candidly admitted fondness for burglariously entering dwelling-houses by attic windows, he was like any other sharp, intelligent, healthy man, and could do well if he cared.

While I talked with him a letter was delivered from a shipping office asking for men. I resolved to give him a start on a sailing ship, as he desired. There was no reason to suppose that he would put anybody aboard to inconvenience, while he could easily adapt himself to a new sphere.

He sailed, and for twelve months I heard nothing but good of him. Then he went ashore at Colombo, and, failing to come aboard when the ship was ready to leave the port, was left behind.

I heard no more of him until last November, when the fact of his existence was recalled by receiving from him a letter, to my mind most diverting, calculated admirably to cause one to forgive all that is recorded against him. It was also most difficult to arrange and follow, being

written on five-and-twenty different scraps of faded yellow paper, and in a scrawl with a blunt lead-pencil, often illegible, so that words had to be guessed at and filled in. I present this letter, and, later, another following, as nearly as I can make them out:—

"Somewhere in blessed Mesopotamia," runs the one which reached me first, "a poor deaf mute, a slender, swarthy, agile Bedouin, about my own age, and so like me, but for the clothing, that I could own him as a brother —somewhere in this blessed land, that afflicted creature wanders, all unable to comprehend what his Mohammedan countrymen, their Turkish masters, and the German superbosses are about.

"Respecting his affliction as by the hand of Allah, they suffer him to wander among their camps and entrenchments. They gaze upon him, half-amused, half in pity, as he views exposed cannon and machine-guns in childlike wonderment; they lead him along labyrinths of trenches for the pleasure of seeing his terror at the engines of destruction which bristle in concealed places; they give him of their food, and, as he eats, they talk over their plans, and the German and Turkish commanders issue instructions: for he is deaf, he cannot hear: he is dumb and illiterate, he cannot tell. They know they have nothing to fear from him.

"Having meandered about till he is weary for change, he essays to move on, and none stay him. He is afflicted and bewitched; he must be pitied and let alone, lest any tormenting him should be likewise smitten, or perish.

"Thus he wanders from camp to camp, his great, dark, frightened eyes seeming to go

ever darker, more lustrous, and more terror-stricken, as he beholds preparations for he knows not what, but fears them as portending evil.

"Now and then he hovers about our lines. But mostly he shuns the society of infidels. Some of our men found him yesterday, a poor starveling; he had wandered up to our defences, seemingly ready to perish. They brought him in and set food before him. He ate ravenously, then spat on the ground, and looked for all the world like cursing the infidel dogs who had rescued and fed him. His face was a perfect study of mingled fear and impotence and rage. They tried to make him hear or speak, but failed. He grew weary of their attentions, and mooned off to headquarters, where somehow he secured admission.

"Of course they would be quite unable to glean from him the barest atom of that large store of information he must possess about the enemy's positions, defences, numbers, and what not. He has eyes to see, if he has not ears to hear, but, alas! he is mute, and he cannot write. If our staff could only know what he has to tell were he willing and able! It might easily mean saving the lives of thousands of men, and wealth beyond the price of a king's ransom.

"He is uneasy as I write. It looks as though he were ready to move on. Likely enough he will leave here soon. I wonder if I dare trust this letter to him? I will risk it, I think. There is little in it, and the paper is not valuable: it is the best I can find. I have often wished to write to you, just to let you know that I am doing my bit for Britain, under this scorching sun, out in Mesopotamia

the blessed. It has struck me that I may as well break silence in describing one who is as I once essayed to be. Certainly he makes a much better mute than I did; but then, those wretched police were so confoundedly incredulous! Perhaps he isn't really a bit more clever, only more fortunate in dealing with true children of Allah instead of suspicious Christian dogs like those with whom I had to do.

"Well, he may lose the envelope containing these bits, exactly as if out of a waste-paper basket, or destroy it; but I will take the chance. If it fails to reach you, you will not miss it. If it does reach you, spare a prayer for this poor Bedouin outcast, for sake of the deaf mute you tried to talk with once in a police-cell, far away.

"I shall be longing to know whether this reaches you, for I have a strange faith in this mute—a sort of brotherly confidence—and I beg you to write early and often if you get this invitation, as I somehow think you will. When you have written, care of that friendly Arab, as directed, I will send you a full account of my doings since my disappearance eight years ago, always supposing that in the meantime a fairly adventurous cat has not been unfortunate enough to lose his ninth life."

So he was with the British force in Mesopotamia, acting as a spy, rendering that dangerous and invaluable service to his country in the guise of a Bedouin, and in his old *rôle* of deaf mute! It took my breath away when the truth dawned. Then, gradually, I realised his special fitness for such service—his command of the German tongue, which I knew of already, and his aptness for learning languages, which had doubtless enabled

him to acquire an easy flow of Turkish and Arabic during his eight years' residence in the East. There was biting irony in the remark that the man so like him as to be recognisable as his brother — himself, of course — stood mute among an unsuspecting enemy: "they give him of their food, and, as he eats, they talk over their plans, and the German and Turkish commanders issue instructions: for he is deaf, he cannot hear: he is dumb and illiterate, he cannot tell. They know they have nothing to fear from him."

I felt so proud of the rogue that I set out straightway to seek his parents. It was a vain quest. They had died, one four, the other five years ago. Their son had "come to honour, and they knew it not." He was an only child, and I could find no relation living in the locality. I returned quite disappointed, because there was no one near to him whom I could tell of his doings, and of whose delight I might write.

It was consequently an unworthy sort of reply that I made to his fascinating letter; there was really so little to say beyond expressing my own admiration of the service he was rendering, and the hope that he would come safely through every hazardous mission. I posted the letter to a curious address which he gave, not without misgivings, for I wondered why on earth I could not have been told to send it to the British Expeditionary Force.

In February I heard from him again:—

> "How an evil reputation clings to a fellow, to be sure! I never said *I* was playing the part of deaf mute. I talked of one sufficiently like me to pass as my own brother, but, please, teacher, I didn't say it was me! Do, please, give him the credit he has earned. Don't rob him of it to pass it on to a rascal like me.

"He deserves your sympathy. For affliction has been added to affliction. He got my letter posted, it seems—at our military post office, likely; then he meandered off once more among his true believing brothers, with whom he stayed over Christmas, although the children of Allah would know nothing of the Christian festival, of course.

"A deserter who came into our lines told how the mute's visit to our camp had become known to the enemy, and how he was received back by his brethren with some suspicion. They fired rifles immediately behind his ears to see if he would start at the sound; they marched him up to a big gun and stood him beside it till the air concussion of a score explosions caused him to bleed from ears and nostrils. He was deaf as a stone; it was evident that he heard not the semblance of a sound. They were satisfied about his hearing; but could he speak, after all?

"Hot irons applied to various tender parts were reckoned one good means for proving this: these being ineffective, though he will bear their scars to his grave, they tried tearing out a finger-nail or two; tears rained down his cheeks, but he uttered no more than a guttural moan. They were convinced. The more callous amongst them swore frightful oaths; the more pious prayed lest vengeance should fall upon them for adding to the sorrows of one whom Allah had afflicted. Afterwards they treated him with marked kindness: so this deserter told. He was wandering up and down the camp, nearly recovered from the wounds their cruelty had inflicted, when he who gave this information left the place for reasons of health, as he

said. But he was a fine liar, and nobody could believe all he said. As there were Germans with the Turks and Arabs, however, the cruelty his tale told of might well be true.

"It was true. A week later, the mute turned up in our lines for the last time. Gangrene had supervened that wrenching out of finger-nails. The doctors had to take off his left arm. Then a marvel happened. He began to speak. Vengeance fell heavily upon those miserable followers of the true Prophet for their lack of charity. He gave away all their plans, describing their positions, and batteries, and encampments with a precision and accuracy I should never have thought possible in a simple child of the desert.

"He is rather a wreck now; perhaps they gave him poor food when they suspected him of treachery, poor beggar—for it turned out that the deserter's tale was substantially true; and he certainly had drunk foul water, for dysentery was added to the trouble with his arm, and the doctors had enough to do to pull him through. Everybody was wondering what would become of the poor body, when he coolly told that he had a little place of his own not a thousand miles from Aden. Once he got there, he said, he would do nicely. A wife and three bonny children were awaiting his return home. He had been settled in that district eight years, and, hearing there was war, had felt his blood stirred with a longing to take some part 'for George' in the fight, calling our gracious King by name in a fashion perhaps excusable in one so long a mute.

"By strange fortune, I have my place not far from Aden, too; and a wife and three

children waiting, also, for my return; and I have lost an arm, and had dysentery: how like we are, to be sure! Well, I cannot blame you if you still refuse to own my brother. But I shall not forsake him—I shall stick to him like his very shadow—for he has earned my respect.

"We are 'blood brothers,' as he says, having gone through the same dangers, fought in the same company, and been wounded with the same wounds. We will retire together, honourably discharged, unfit for further active service. We will make our way together to that little spot near Aden which is home to us both. Perhaps I will tell you more of him when we get there.

"I must say a word or two about myself in my closing lines. I saw the little place I have mentioned as we sailed up the Red Sea, and I was dreaming of it all the way back to Colombo. I could not get it out of my mind, so I left the ship and returned there.

"I had fallen in love very badly with a bit of country, beautifully situated on rising ground, and plentifully wooded. I cannot for the life of me tell why, but of course there was a woman in it, seen at Aden. I made up my mind to do something to enable me to make my home in that spot, even if I could only manage to visit it at holiday time.

"The stars favoured me. The little spot I had seen from the ship became my home. I have a wife there; if I brought her to England people would turn up their noses because she is not white-skinned; but she is pure as a lily, and her heart is like gold. She is much more British, too, than many of her white sisters who call themselves Englishwomen. She did not demur for an instant when she

saw I longed to take a hand in the fight. Nay, she made it easy for me to go, letting me understand that she was quite able to run our little plantation whilst I was away.

"Unfortunately she cannot read or write. I have heard nothing of her since I left home last June, and I am anxious to know how she is doing. I don't care who knows, either; I'm longing to see her again, as pretty a mother of as pretty a couple of girls and as bonnie a lad as ever were born. What do I care if they are dark-skinned? If I were not swarthy, where would my bit of spying have come in? There, I have given the whole show away now! I may as well tell you how it came about; for really it is pride that causes me to write at all.

"Whilst I tried to conceal my bit of work, I did want you to know that that scamp of a deaf mute who put you to the trouble and expense of sending him to sea, only to desert his ship within a year, had British blood and British pluck in him, and the devilment helped more than it hindered him when the time for action came.

"I know no army drill; besides, I guessed they might sniff out my character if I applied for enlistment. It struck me that I might work off that deaf and dumb trick on the Arabs and Turks, and I felt I could perhaps bring a little information in if I came across any German officers. They would hardly expect a beggar Bedouin mute to know their language. Well, it came off; and three finger-nails, and then an arm, came off with it; and a few scars which won't come off were added for a sort of make-up. But I played the game better than I did when less depended on it. I think it was worth playing:

all the more as our own men were about as mystified as the rest—all but one or two, who learned something from the Bedouin mute which I hope will help their plans a little.

"I have slipped away as quietly as I came. I could do no more good there, a bit of a wreck physically, and my spy game played out. But somebody is waiting for me at home, thank God. I wish everybody could be sure of such a welcome as I shall get. It will pay for all. Good luck to you, sir; good-bye."

"About how many letters do you get a week?" a magistrate asked me, after piecing together the five-and-twenty scraps of paper comprising the former, and the seven-and-twenty comprising this, and reading the contents with keen interest. I replied that I receive a weekly average of a hundred and twenty.

"Well," he continued, "if the war lasts twenty years, and your supply of letters is maintained, you'll get none more strange than these among all the hundred and twenty-four thousand odd you stand to receive. It's the oddest story of real life I ever read. You ought to put it in a book. It's as good as a novel, and more interesting, because it's true. They ought to give that fellow the Victoria Cross. He's a brick, and no mistake."

XV.

A PALS' QUARTETTE.

THEY all came under my notice at the outset from committing an offence described by the Clerk of the Peace at the Court of Quarter Session when he read over to them, as they stood in the dock, the charge following:—

"You, Herbert Morgan, you, Philip Broadhead, you, Percival Gregory, and you, James Woodhouse, are all charged, jointly and severally, that you did, on the thirty-first day of March one thousand nine hundred and eleven, feloniously and unlawfully break and enter certain premises, to wit, three unoccupied dwelling-houses, . . . and that you did steal, take, and carry away therefrom certain goods, the property of one Edwin Arthur Melville; to wit, three fire grates, three ovens, and other articles which were then in the said premises. You are also, all of you, further charged that you did feloniously receive the said goods, well knowing them to have been stolen. Are you guilty, or not guilty?"

They all pleaded guilty; they were then addressed again by the Clerk with the usual formula:—

"You are all guilty on your own confession of felony. Have you anything to say why the Court should not pass sentence upon you?"

They had nothing to say. To tell the truth,

they did not appear to be specially troubled what course the Court saw fit to take. They had spent a few days in prison awaiting trial. Probably they regarded going back to serve some sort of sentence as a certainty, and thought it useless to worry much about the matter.

The Recorder had studied their faces while the Clerk read over the charge and took their plea. He called on prosecuting Counsel to briefly state the case against them, then he addressed the prisoners.

"You appear," he said, "to have found out that in these unoccupied, dilapidated dwelling-houses there was this scrap-iron, and you entered the premises and helped yourselves to it. You knew it was not your property, and you ought to have let it alone.

"Still, this is not like the usual charge of house-breaking we hear. There is no previous conviction recorded against any of you. You have all of you been in prison a few days awaiting trial.

"I propose to bind you over to be of good behaviour for the next twelve months. If during that time you do anything of this sort again, you will be brought up and punished for this offence as well as for any other you may commit.

"My impression is that you have got into loose habits and bad company. I am giving you this chance in the hope that you will pull yourselves together. I am asking the probation officer to look after you, and to give you a little advice. Take notice of what he says to you; attend to your work; and don't come here again, or you may find yourselves severely dealt with."

They stepped from the dock to the Clerk's table to formally acknowledge themselves each bound in the sum of five pounds to be of good behaviour, and to appear before the Court for conviction and sentence when called on at any time during "the

period of twelve months now next ensuing," also "to lead honest and industrious lives, not to associate with thieves and other undesirable persons, nor frequent undesirable places," and for the said period to be under my supervision. All this they agreed to readily.

It looked very simple to carry out. Their ages ranged from twenty-three to twenty-five. They were labourers, in appearance much like other men of their class. Until a few weeks before committing the offence to which they had pleaded guilty, all of them followed regular employment, and they were all confident of reinstatement under their former masters.

But I soon found difficulties to arise. For example, Morgan had only to enter his father's door to be at once an associate of thieves and other undesirable persons, his father and his father's brother, who also lived in the house, having both served imprisonment for larceny, and, from their ability to maintain themselves without doing ordinary work, it seemed to the police quite likely that they were still engaged in the old game, though, since the young man's two sisters were notorious street-walkers, it was faintly possible that the girls' immoral earnings sufficed to keep the older men in idleness.

Morgan's mother was a wicked woman, absolutely callous regarding her daughters' mode of life, and she kept such a house! Indescribably filthy and wretched, it seemed incredible that even a drunken man could be tempted inside, while it was quite plain that no young person could retain self-respect or morality there. Where, then, was that wretched fellow to go when work was finished? The lowest public-house was better than his home; would that also be regarded as an undesirable place? Home or public-house, and now and then some music or picture hall—these were the only places open for

him to frequent that he knew of. If he stayed at home, he was staying in a hell; if he went to public-house or hall of amusement, possibly he would meet with companions of evil reputation, and earn reproof in consequence.

Then in the case of Broadhead: the weak-minded, slatternly, good-for-nothing mother cared only to secure frequent potations of ale; home, husband, children had been alike neglected for thirty years. Philip was now the only member of the family remaining with the parents—his father having long since got into the way of using the house merely as somewhere to sleep; if he chose to spend his spare time there it must be in the company of his besotted mother and the equally besotted neighbours who occasionally shared her carousals. Almost any hovel, any pig-sty, was more inviting than home under these conditions.

Gregory was not quite so ill-placed. His mother was a hard-working, clean woman, who kept her home tidy, but her husband had "never taken to Percy, not being his own, like; and he sneered at the lad a lot, 'cos I'd happened the misfortune to have him before I wor married," as the mother complained. Under the circumstances it was not strange that I seldom found her son in the house.

Woodhouse was worst situated of all. Married at nineteen years of age, at the end of three miserable months he was foolish enough to thrash his seventeen-year-old wife when her ceaseless "nagging" had grown intolerable. She left him, returning to her parents, and taking out a summons against him for persistent cruelty. He told his side of the story to the Court when the case came on; a little good advice was given to the victims of this child marriage, and the summons was dismissed. But they never lived together again. The wife remained at her parents'

home and maintained herself by working at a laundry, until, a year later, she threw in her lot with a married man, separated from his own wife, to whom she had borne three children by the time she was three-and-twenty years of age.

Fettered by the mock marriage, Woodhouse felt compelled to put up with a home with his parents, the very discomfort of which was largely responsible for his taking a wife so early. His mother, a tall, gaunt, lazy person, who never rose till nearly midday, complained without ceasing of entirely imaginary diseases as excuse for her chronic neglect of the house. His father suffered in silence when compelled to be at home, which he took care was not often. The young man himself had come to patronise a public-house from the same causes as his father, and it chanced that the public-house he fancied was regarded by the police as an undesirable place.

I was told within a month that the four young men were sailing near the wind; it was doubtful whether they were observing the terms of their recognisances; certainly they were suspected of associating with thieves and frequenting undesirable places; but it was not denied that, so far, they were leading industrious lives. I saw at once that being often together, and occasionally associating with the elder Morgans, brought them under strong suspicion.

There was only one course open to mend matters that I knew of. I took it: sending one here, another there, a third elsewhere, and the fourth to still another place, where work and good respectable lodgings had been secured for them. I fear it was only by straining my powers that I managed this. Probably my charges regarded me as possessing means of enforcing the acceptance of my advice, for they did not depart too willingly. At any rate, they went, settling down quite well after

a few weeks. Good wages and comfortable lodgings played a part in their contentment, but a factor of more moment was the discovery of sane and healthy means of spending idle hours.

Gregory lodged at a small farmhouse. When he had finished work at a neighbouring colliery he gave a little help on the farm, and for reward was allowed to take a gun into a wood over which his landlord had the right of shooting. In this way he became both a satisfied workman and a fair shot.

Broadhead, obliged to travel three miles from lodging to work, set up a bicycle, and discovered a latent love for mechanics which spurred him on in due course to construct a motor-cycle, somewhat primitive in appearance, but a good runner notwithstanding: good enough, anyhow, to get its designer fined thirty shillings for exceeding the speed limit when out for a ride one day. From constructing his own, he passed on to repairing other people's machines, and soon had difficulty in crowding all the work offered him into an ordinary day.

Morgan, billeted with an enthusiastic horticulturist, himself developed a passion for flower-growing, sending me two or three boxes of most beautiful blooms in proof of his success, and finally beating his instructor with exhibits at a village flower show, taking first prize for violas against all comers.

Woodhouse felt himself called upon to make more than money payment for permission to share the paradise of a home he now enjoyed, comparing his present with any former state. He lodged with an elderly couple, the husband being a village carrier, keeping two horses for business purposes. Taking a real pride in feeding and grooming these, as his strength, and the shortness of the hours he had to work at a pit, easily permitted, Woodhouse got to have a real affection

for the animals, which was noticed with keen appreciation by their owner, who talked vaguely of a day when he should himself retire, leaving James to conduct the carrier's business.

Such being the state of all my four charges when the period of probation expired, I was able to present an excellent report of their conduct and prospects. I might quite truthfully have handed in an exactly similar report two years later, as they were still equally satisfactorily situated.

But in May 1914 I was startled by hearing that a double wedding was contemplated. The banns had been already published "for the second time of asking," when news came to me that Gregory and Broadhead were actually such idiots as to propose marrying those notorious harlots, Morgan's two sisters. For once in a while I made an attempt at that utterly hopeless task, the preventing of a marriage determined upon by the free will of the contracting parties. Of course I could not get either of the men to agree with my view. They knew what sort of girls they were about to marry; but, they said, "because they've had a bad bringing up, it isn't to say as they won't alter when they've a chance. Neither of us has been angels; and we love them lasses, and they love us: they've not done aught wrong for many a long day: they're as respectable now as here and there one, and they'll suit us better than lasses as have always been straight. We shall get on better together. None of us can throw stones."

Well, they married, each man bearing his wife proudly from a slum in a great city to a cottage in the particular country village which had become his home. The natural result followed within a month in each case. Tiring of what was to them the deadly dull, humdrum village life, both women forsook their husbands, and returned to

the city and its streets. Their departure accentuated scandal which their conduct had already caused; Gregory, unable to any longer hold up his head, was first to make a total wreck of all I had tried to do on his behalf. In July 1914 I found him, a ragged vagrant, and a temporary patient in the workhouse asylum here, suffering from *delirium tremens*. Broadhead did not quite come to that, but he also scattered home and everything to the winds, left the work at which he had done so well, and came back to this city to spend his time in drunken folly.

Meanwhile Morgan, tempted here for the wedding feast, and drinking to excess, had gone back to his place with head throbbing and temper out of tune; a state of things not remedied by any means when he proceeded to the village inn next morning, to spend the whole day in drinking instead of resuming work. Disapproval of his conduct was manifested in a coldness at his lodging. He retaliated by destroying a bed of wallflowers in which his landlord took especial pride, trampling on them in a drunken freak, and so earning his dismissal from that home to spend the night in an outhouse.

If he had possessed sense enough to apologise in the morning, all might yet have been well. Instead of that he applied for his few possessions, went to the colliery for the balance of wages due to him, and came back to his native town to secure work as a navvy, and to live at a common lodging-house.

Woodhouse was really unfortunate. He went on in excellent fashion till his wife, one of a party taking a Sunday motor trip into the country, chanced to identify him as he paused to look at the charabanc which had stopped in his village, owing to some mechanical defect which necessitated waiting three hours, until the unsatisfac-

tory part could be replaced by one brought from town. The vixen made full use of those three hours. By the time the vehicle moved away every village gossip was talking of Woodhouse as a mean, contemptible wife-beater and deserter. They quickly made life there unbearable for him. By August, he too was here again.

It was not long before the four old comrades were once more associated. The war having made it easy to get situations, all four received employment in the same armament firm. They drew and wasted excellent wages, going the pace in style, Gregory and Broadhead living apart from their wretched wives, as Woodhouse did from his, and Morgan staying with his friends at the same common lodging-house.

On the 27th October the four appeared once more before the Court, on a charge of larceny as servant. The father and the uncle of Morgan had been at work, persuading them to pilfer valuable pieces of high speed tool steel from their employers: there was little doubt of the fact, although the evidence was unfortunately insufficient to secure the conviction of the prime movers in the felony. The defendants elected to be dealt with summarily, and they were sentenced to short terms of imprisonment.

I next heard of them through Gregory's wife applying to me in December. Her own husband, and also Broadhead, her sister's husband, had enlisted, she told me, and she sought a little information about separation allowances, which I vainly tried to prevent these despicable creatures from obtaining. A few days later I learned indirectly that Morgan and Woodhouse were also in the new army.

It was not until February 1915 that any of the four communicated the news personally to me. On the 9th of that month Morgan and Gregory

called. They both looked exceedingly smart in uniform, and were obviously in the most robust health, but they were by no means sober. I gave them a little good advice to which they listened patiently, then signed the pledge, and went their way. A fortnight later Broadhead and Woodhouse called, also perceptibly the worse for drink. Like their comrades they listened to my counsel, signed the total abstinence pledge, and departed.

I heard no more of them until three months later, when Morgan sent me the following account of his brother-in-law's doings:—

"There's been a lot of bother here through some blooming German snipers, regular Bisley chaps, as hit the bull nine times out of ten, winging everybody as they could see within half a mile, and killing as many as five a day. It got hot, I can tell you, sir; and at last Percy [Gregory] said he'd do a bit o' poaching if Captain would give him leave, go out at night and bag them blooming snipers.

"Captain said if he liked to take his chance he could, or some'at as came to the same thing, after Percy had badgered him a lot. So he went about an hour after dark one night. The snipers were in a bit of a wood, and he made for it in the dark and waited for daylight.

"Just before dawn he saw four Germans leave a little arbour they'd made of branches of trees and bracken. They were making for some big trees which turned out to have had the trunks hollowed out. Percy had his rifle with him, of course. The light was very poor, but he knew he'd got to risk it before they reached the trees. He stretched one out first shot, and, before the rest could fair make out what was amiss he had another lying on the bracken. The other two began to run back to the arbour; he fired twice at them and

missed, but he nailed one with the fifth shot, then run after him as was left, and followed him into the arbour. When he got near enough, he threw his gun down, and there was a bit of wrestling-bout. Percy won. He had to lie low in that wood all day, because the Huns had heard his shots and sent a company to see what was up. He came in at night all right but for a broken wrist and a stab in the side as he'd got in his wrestling do.

"There were some of our men what wouldn't believe his tale. It made us mad for a bit: you know, sir, as he's no liar, choose what other faults he has. He went to be attended to at the hospital, and the doubters owned as they'd believe what he'd said if the sniping stopped, which it did; so now Percy's in for a D.C.M., and everybody anxious for him to get it."

Evidently that by-product of his sojourn in the country, learning how to shoot in a wood, had proved useful to Gregory, whom I knew for a brave man, and whose word it would never occur to me to doubt. I wrote with peculiar pleasure to congratulate him on the success which had attended his effort to render signal service to his country. He replied characteristically:—

"I don't know what sort of a tale Ned Morgan's been telling you. It wasn't a deal as I did. A child could have done it. What I can't understand is why there's so much hanging back with young fellers in England, plenty of shooting, and no gun licence to pay. It's no use talking to such as is left about defending our country — our mothers and wives and sisters and the little children. But they might come if all they're seeking's a bit of life. I should have thought as all the thousands what's come from the world's end

would have made them anxious for a share in it.

"I've never been half as happy as I am here: we're all alike for that; four pals together, as busy as the day's long. Ned's trumps. He's a favourite with everybody, and officer's servant, if you please, at that. There isn't a finer chap in the Army. You'll never learn from him how much he's done. And, Mr Holmes, it's God's truth, and you'll be glad to know it, we've none of the four of us tasted drink since we signed the pledge last time with you: and all of us better men for it."

Their trenches were rushed after a heavy bombardment in July. When they had recaptured them Woodhouse wrote:—

"Of all the dogs! when we got back to our positions if they hadn't killed all our wounded! They're devils, not men. I can tell you we let them have it, such as we got hold of. There isn't such another race of fiends under the sun. Talk about probation! there's not one in a thousand worth another chance; happen one in three thousand might do a bit of good. Hanging's what all the rest wants.

"When will young fellows in England wake up? It's about time they had conscription for the rotters. Haven't they as good a right to be here as us? And they're striking and doing, blast 'em. Why can't they act with a bit of sense.

"You should see the Scotch soldiers; there's that many of 'em, it's marvellous how a country as little as that has found as many. They say it's ten times as little as England, and out of every ten men, women, and children, from the old man with one foot in the grave to the baby in the cradle, one man's a soldier. It's

wonderful, and they're wonderful men and all. Talk about fighting! There aren't better soldiers in the world.

"Did you hear as Philip [Broadhead] was made a sergeant. Well, he deserves it. He's done well, he has; everybody's pleased he's been promoted. Tell a few of them what's loafing at home to come here and do a bit. It'll help them as much as anybody else, and if they've a bit of pluck in 'em they'll find it right down enjoyable."

All four were able to leave the trenches and come home for a little rest about Christmas 1915. They called with palpable pride to give me further details of their service, but still more, I think, to demonstrate that even while on leave they could refrain from tasting intoxicants.

"We could have had barrels, Mr Holmes, if we would have done," they said. "But while we've been out there we've thought a good deal about you, and how it was hardly the thing for us to come and see a gentleman like you, holding opinions like you hold, worse for drink; and we all said as we'd give you a pleasant surprise, like, when we saw you again, showing you as we can keep sober when we try, and as we've made our minds up to touch no more of the stuff till the war's over."

They carried out their admirable and most creditable resolution during the whole of the leave, to my inexpressible wonder and gladness. For the homes to which they came back might well have convinced them that it was hopeless to find comfort except in a public-house. The music and picture halls came as a real blessing to them; and the kindness of certain good folk who opened their houses to them, inviting the men to dinner or tea or supper, they will not soon forget. One wonders why the churches generally have not

specialised more in this branch of Christian activity. Can it be because the miserable state of hundreds of soldiers' homes is unknown? The few who both realise the facts and take practical steps to alleviate the sadness of some home-comings know something, but by no means all, of the gratitude and affection their kindness has earned.

This missive came from Broadhead after returning to Flanders:—

> "Kindly tell that good lady what we all think of her for inviting us chaps to her house for a whole day, and feeding us, and looking after us, as if we were kings; and please tell that young lady who played and sang to us by the hour, the daughter, I think she was, that we're always humming and singing the things she played, and we shall never forget what they did for us.
>
> "It makes us feel ready to wade through blood and fire before we'll let the Germans touch a hair of the head of any of our English women when we think how grand and kind they all are."

The great majority, most certainly, but, alas! not all; he knew it only too well. His own wife, wasting his separation allowance, as her sister was wasting Gregory's, totally unfit to be called by the names of men so honourably engaged, but whose lives they burden and darken; and the wife of Woodhouse, lying to him as she did after his enlistment, declaring that she had put away her paramour, and so cajoling her husband into suffering her to enjoy the allowance, even persuading him also, in his simple but foolish good-nature, to pass off the other man's children as his own; and when all this had been done, poor Woodhouse came back for Christmas to find signs that another child not his own was about to be born, and learned the miserable truth!—Broadhead knew it

all. Moreover, he knew that Morgan was going short of money that his worthless father and mother might have help from Army funds too. It is very terrible.

There they are, the four heroic comrades, still facing death for Britain daily. So long as they remain able to serve, while the war shall last, they will remain splendidly doing their duty. I have not the smallest doubt about that. But when the war is over, what? Coming back to the homes awaiting them, can it be argued that they will have the smallest chance?

Surely common justice demands that we for whom they risk everything should make strong endeavour to radically alter their prospects. About the probability of the reformation of such wives as those just mentioned I am very doubtful. I know that it is not altogether impossible, but the prospect is so faint, how skilful soever the person handling their case, I cannot be hopeful. Such women are dead to all those finer feelings which are the crown and beauty of their sex. There is next to nothing left to work upon.

What I think might be done is to offer elsewhere a home to all who at the close of the war will, like Morgan, have no decent place to which to return. I would ask whether it might not be well also to let it be quite understood that no soldier need come back to a wife who has failed to keep herself chaste, although in receipt of the allowance her husband's patriotism earned. Instead of forcing our heroes back where their names have been dishonoured, where home exists no longer, where the possibility of honest living is rendered slender by the fault of those who, forgetting most beautiful and sacred duties, seem only to know how to trail in the dust all which they should hold most dear, I would offer every man so cruelly handicapped a clean new start.

In the spacious regions over which, thanks to their heroism through God's good grace, the flag of Britain still waves and shall wave, all who care to cast behind them the miserable past, with all that divorce would rid them of, should be enabled to begin again. This is my conclusion.

Many will disagree with my opinions. There is no doubt much to be said on the other side concerning certain points which I have not passed under review. A great deal, for example, might be written concerning wronged wives. But I am absolutely certain of this, to offer no alternative to men whose case is as I have set out here, to force them to return under existing conditions to their old surroundings, is to deliberately invite a big increase in all manner of crime, including, I fear, much violent crime, before a year has expired after the war is done.

However, I am rather an opponent of divorce under any circumstances than an advocate of it on a wholesale scale, as some may possibly imagine. If really strong, earnest, patient, persistent effort be wisely made to alter the life and conduct of the wife of every soldier so cruelly wronged, there is no saying what great good will come of it. The drastic plan I have suggested may be made so unnecessary as to look only ridiculous. In that case I shall heartily and sincerely rejoice. But the effort is not being made at all adequately, although so sorely needed, and at once. Nor is it in the least an easy task which any person of kindly feeling can discharge. It calls for workers the most skilful, tactful, patient, devoted, consecrated. And only those who have given themselves to earnest endeavour this way possess the right, in my judgment, to raise a voice in denunciation of another and quite different plan.

XVI.

PRIVATE THOMAS WILLIAMS.

TOMMY is built after the stiff, squat plan. His face was not beautiful, even before close and constant study of the grievances he laboured under had caused deep wrinkles to appear prematurely upon his shallow forehead. He has small, dull, lustreless eyes, a pointed reddish-pink nose, thin colourless lips, behind which two great yellowish-black teeth stand fierce and prominent, calling more attention to themselves in their solitary dignity as sole tenants of his jaws than is usually called by a whole mouthful of the most perfect molars. His cheeks are thin and sunken. It is said that a deep scar about three-quarters of an inch long immediately under the left corner of the lower lip is due to an accident.

The allegation is, though I think it a fable, that he one day chanced to enter the shop of a particularly talkative barber for the purpose of getting shaved. The lather boy attended to him while the barber carried on a political argument with other customers. Tommy's turn came while the artist's argument was still unfinished, and he absent-mindedly put a thumb into Tommy's mouth to push out a sunken cheek so as to facilitate perfect workmanship with the razor. Unfortunately his political antagonist at that moment made a remark so startling as to cause the barber

to let the razor slip through Tommy's cheek into his own thumb.

Tommy jumped out of the chair as a mixture of lather and blood streamed from his face. "What are you a-doing on?" he enquired in deeply injured tones, looking into a glass and mopping his wound with a towel put round his neck as though in anticipation of the catastrophe. "You've gone and cut a hole right through mi cheek."

But the barber was in no mood for tender commiseration; also, perhaps, anticipation of a demand for compensation made him adopt a truculent tone as he replied—

"What are *you* doing on, you skinny-jawed reptile, bothering anybody to shave a mug like yours? You've made me cut mi thumb right through to t' nail. Get out o' mi shop wi' you, and be quick about it."

History does not record any more of the sequel than is shown by the scar. Perhaps the barber knew Tommy. In that case he showed wisdom in adopting a policy better calculated than any other for causing him to realise that he must make the best of a bad job.

There was not much of his "gingery" hair, probably there never was any great chance of a thick crop: his fingers were constantly in it, and the roots must have suffered in consequence. Scratching his head over grievances was so habitual with him that he did it unconsciously.

We did not get on well together, Tommy and I. He alleged that it was entirely my fault we were not better friends.

"You've known me since I wor four-and-twenty, Mr Holmes," he complained once, "and you've never took to me like you've took to a many all the fourteen year what's gone by since. I don't know how it is, but you seem as if you'll never gi'e

me a fair chance. It's them there police, I reckon, what does it. You'll believe all as they say, and not a thing as I tell you. That's about it."

He might easily have been further from the truth. Information given by the police concerning Tommy's mode of life had something to do with the fact he complained of, that I had given others better chances than I had ever offered him. There was something to be said, however, on the other side. I put it to him thus:—

"What would you have me do, Tommy? I never remember you in a job or out of a scrape for a month at a time since I picked you up at first, fourteen years ago as you say. How many starts have I given you—twenty-five or thirty?"

"Five, more likely," he grunted.

"No," I continued, "I'll look it up. The number can't be less than twenty-five—it may be thirty—but we'll see in a minute or two."

I turned up the pages devoted to his career. Then I read out something of what was written while he helplessly and sullenly applied his rakes to his head:—

"Eighteen hundred and ninety-nine—a second-hand suit of clothes, two shirts, two pairs of socks, boots, a cap, and a situation as foundry labourer: that's how we start, Tommy," I said; "the year after, another pair of boots and another situation; in March 1901 a further job, and again in November the same year. So we go on. There are twenty-nine occasions altogether on which you've been put on your feet in one way or another."

"There's a big mistake somewhere, Mr Holmes," he protested, still raking his thin thatch. "Are you readin' what you've done for somebody else?"

I was not. It was difficult to convince him, but I succeeded at last.

"Well," he said, "I didn't think you'd took as much trouble wi' me. I will own as you haven't

been as hard as I said you had. But you've done a lot more for many a one than you have for me —I mean spent a lot more on 'em. I haven't cost you a deal; besides that first suit o' clothes, and a pair o' boots now and then, I shouldn't think I've cost you a penny."

"I shouldn't think you've cost me less than five pounds, Tommy," I replied, "counting everything I've done for you these fourteen years, to say nothing of the trouble I have taken getting masters to give you work. And you've been a beauty, haven't you? You've given me some satisfaction for what I've tried to do."

The rakes worked vigorously while he studied his reply. "I've not done no worser nor a good many more," he said at last. "What about Joe Green? You'd helped him many a hundred times afore you bought him all them there togs and started him off on a ship like a regular toff. Why can't I have a chance same as him?"

"Well, Tommy, for one thing, because I've no faith in you; for another thing, because I don't think you'd care about Joe Green's job. He's a a trimmer on a steamer; it's hard work and hot, and the wages are not high. If I thought you'd go aboard and make the best of it, I'd take you to a ship to-morrow."

He brightened wonderfully. "I'll take it on, Mr Holmes," he said, "and thank you kindly."

"You know what you *are* taking on?"

"Yes, firing a ship's boilers."

"Right, and it's hard work for small pay."

"It'll do; give me a chance."

"Very well, come along here to-morrow morning at nine o'clock. I'll have you rigged out and aboard ship by nine at night. Here's sixpence. Go and get something to eat—no drink, mind. I'll pay for a bed for you at the old place, and supper and breakfast. Nine o'clock to-morrow,

remember; now be off, so that I can get something done."

He retired, looking grateful for once. I did not expect him to turn up next day, and I was not disappointed. The police intimated that he was busy with associates who frequented a low tavern in a slum quarter of the city, and my habit of taking notice of what they told me, so objectionable to Tommy, made me fail to wonder even what kept him away.

Coming a week afterwards, on the off-chance of getting me to buy a pair of boots for him, he appeared to have entirely forgotten the appointment, looking curiously embarrassed when I reminded him of it, and protesting that "there must have been some mistake."

"No doubt," I agreed; "I made it in giving you that sixpence for a bit of dinner: you went into a public-house and joined your old friends. But you'd have done the same, anyhow. What brings you here to-day?"

"I've got work," he declared, "and all I want is a pair of boots. Then I can start to-morrow morning."

"You've come to the wrong shop, Tommy; I've left off keeping your particular size in boots."

"But you'll give me one more chance, Mr Holmes; you won't give poor Tommy up altogether?"

"Why should I keep on for ever buying you boots, Tommy?"

"But on'y this once more."

"Why: is there no other way for me to waste my money, think you?"

"I've nobody else to look to, Mr Holmes; if you don't gi'e me a lift, I'm done."

"What about the sea, Tommy? I'll take you right away, if you're ready."

"Well, I've been thinking it over, Mr Holmes, an' it won't suit me; I'm certain sure it won't.

I'm weak-chested, consumptive, t' doctor says; and it'd never do for me to be among coal-dust. And I've got this here job for to-morrow, so there's no need."

"All right, Tommy; go your own way, get your own work, and buy your own boots. I'm tired of talking to you and trying to help you. Be off, and let me see you no more."

"You're not going to send me wi'out them boots, are you, Mr Holmes? and me a poor orphan an' all, with neither father nor mother."

"A good many people are orphans at eight-and-thirty, Tommy. I was one at fifteen."

"Wor you now, Mr Holmes? well, it's hard lines: I'm very sorry, I am; I can feel for anybody like that. Gi'e me a pair o' boots now, do."

He pleaded in earnest and pathetic tones, throwing in a little sympathy for my own case most judiciously. It had no effect.

"Get along, you humbug," I only concluded; "go and earn a pair of boots, or else go to the workhouse."

Tommy departed sorrowfully. "It's them there police what's upset me again," he muttered as he went; "they've been openin' their mouths as usual."

They opened their arms as well, a few days later, embracing Tommy as he sought to dispose of some knives and spoons which they alleged he had not come by honestly. He was brought before the Court, and charged with feloniously receiving the knives and spoons, well knowing them to have been stolen.

The suspicion was that he was being made the tool of a gang of thieves whose company he was in the habit of frequenting when out of prison. He was not a thief himself, but his idle and drunken habits made him willing to run considerable risks in picking up a living; he was not a

bit particular how the casual coppers came for his food and shelter so long as the getting of them did not involve heavy and protracted labour. His manner of life had been much the same from the day I first met him, and the fact that I was never able to induce him to remain long in any situation, was accounted for by his having found an easier way of subsisting than any I could recommend.

In this particular instance his defence to the charge was on all fours with many a previous attempt when he had found himself similarly situated.

According to his tale, he had met a man, a perfect stranger, who offered him one hundred ivory-handled table-knives and twenty dozen electro-plated dessert-spoons for five shillings. Thinking it easily possible to sell the articles separately at a penny apiece, thereby making a net profit of one pound three shillings and fourpence, Tommy naturally snapped the bargain.

"What was the man like?" the Magistrate enquired with evident interest.

"He wor a tall chap, sir," Tommy replied, after some hesitation; "I can't tell very well what he wor like; it wor t' first time as I'd seen him, an' I didn't take much notice on him; it never flashed through mi mind as he hadn't got 'em honest. He says, 'Here, Tommy lad, thou'll be able to make a bit out o' these; I'll let thee have em' for five bob': and I snapped, of course, like anybody else would a done."

"Should you know the man again if you met him? He seems to know you; he gave you a name; and he was very anxious to put a bargain in your way. You ought to be able to tell him well enough," the Magistrate went on.

"I don't think as I should, sir," Tommy answered confidentially; "not without he made himself

known to me, like; you see, I'm not very good at faces, sir. A lot o' folks as I don't know knows me."

"It's a pity," commented the Magistrate in sympathetic conclusion: "he seems to be a man worth knowing. Well, you must take your trial on the charge."

The higher Court was equally incredulous, but the Judge took less pains to conceal his contempt for Tommy's tale, stigmatising it as pure balderdash, invented rather as an excuse for evading questions as to how he really came into possession of the stolen goods than for anything else, and sending him to penal servitude for three years in recognition of the number of his convictions on similar charges.

"I'm going to be a better lad now, Mr Holmes," he told me when he regained liberty; "I want you to tell mi mother as I've give over being naughty, and get her to have me back home."

"I wasn't aware you had a mother, Tommy," I replied; "you've palmed yourself off to me about a score times as a motherless orphan. What do you mean?"

"Oh, I've got a mother, on'y she never been a deal o' good to me since she married her stephusband. He turned her again me, like, and she let him twank me till I wor black and blue all over; that's why I left home when I wor fourteen, an' never bothered 'em no more. Her stephusband's dead now; an' one o' mi half-brothers is in a church choir an' t'other's in a pawnshop. They're ever so respectable. But if you tell 'em as poor old Tommy's turned over a new leaf, an' goin' to be a good lad now, happen they'll have him back."

I said I would enquire into the matter; meanwhile I got Tommy rigged out in decent working clothes, the suit given him on discharge from

prison being too good to spoil at once in the work I had secured for him as a foundry labourer, at which he made a start next day.

It turned out that his tale about his mother and his half-brothers was substantially true. There was a little discrepancy between his own and his mother's stories of the cause of the long estrangement, the mother's opinion being that Tommy might have made a better lad had he been "twanked" more.

"You see, sir," she said, "him not being my second husband's lad, he didn't care about touching him; so he got off with such chastising as I could give him myself. He was always as slippery as an eel and as hard as nails, so I couldn't make much impression on him. He wanted a man's hand, like his brothers had, him being their own father, and feeling as he'd a right to correct 'em. And look what they've made o' themselves! He needn't go and make out as he'd anything to leave home for. He went to please himself; and this isn't the first time as I've heard of him wanting to come back. We tried him five times before he was one-and-twenty, but it was his idea as he ought to rule the place, and we've been better without him since he was loose (of age).

"If he likes to think about it when he's been in regular work a month, I'll talk it over with his brothers, and see what they say. I don't think as they'll make any bother if he gives signs of wanting to alter. I shall have to write to the one what's in the Army now, and see. But I haven't much faith in Tommy. He takes after his father, and *he* was never any good. Why doesn't he 'list for a soldier?"

If Tommy took after his father in character, he certainly took after his mother in looks. Her stiff, squat figure, pointed nose, wrinkled forehead, sunken cheeks, toothless mouth, save for two

prominent fangs, and thin "gingery" hair, were exactly reproduced in her son, as was also a peculiarly sullen and discontented countenance. Still, I did not blame her for declining to receive Tommy till it had been proved that he was earnestly endeavouring to amend his past life.

I reported the result of my mission when he called on me at the week-end to tell of satisfaction with his work, but acute dissatisfaction with his ancient enemy the police, who, he declared, had caused him to be put to the trouble of finding other shelter than the lodging-house at which he had booked a room.

"And," he complained further, "they're always insultin' me. When I went to ax 'em what made 'em interfere wi' mi lodgings, they sneered and said, 'Why don't you 'list?'"

It was interesting to hear the allegation. I did not believe it; but it amused me, being expressed in almost the exact words his mother used. Since she had not seen him for years, the enquiry was not unnatural in her case, though I was tickled by it, having his most unlikely military aspect before my mental vision. It was quite impossible that the police should have dreamed of such a solution. Tommy was drawing upon his inexhaustible store of imaginary grievances.

I pacified him as best I could, and, being able to commend the unusual virtue, for him, of working steadily for six days in one place, we parted better friends than had been the case after a call when he had spent a week in any situation I had previously found him. Indeed he appeared to have taken a strong fancy to me as surprising as gratifying after nearly seventeen years of misunderstanding.

"I shall call an' see you ivery week," he promised; "you'll see as I shall go straight now. I shall be livin' at mi mother's in a three week

after next. They're rare an' well suited wi' mi at mi work. I'm there to mi time ivery morning, an' I've neither had a drink nor a smoke sin' I come from yonder [prison]; an' I'm not goin' to have neither. I've turned clean round."

The fact that all his old companions were either in the Army or else in prison had more to do with his gratifying success than anything else. I had no doubt at all about that. He must have quickly tired of the sole company of his own newly acquired virtues, pleasant as he seemed to find their contemplation for a brief space. I looked in vain for a call from him at the following week-end. Enquiry elicited the information that he had left his work and joined the Army. The news seemed incredible.

However, I was forced to recognise its truth when he sent me a letter, written on the well-known Y.M.C.A. service paper, from a military camp. His missive ran thus:—

"GOOD SIR,—I thank you very much for getting me employment at Robisson's Foundry. I do not know what you may think of me as being a soldier. I have a brother at the Front, and I could not rest while I 'listed. I hope as you think I did a good thing.

"I should thank you very much if you will let the police know, and I hope they will not take advantage of it. I am happy at present. I hope they will give me a chance. I did not tell them at all that I left the town on Friday 23rd of October, and I hope there will be no trouble. I shall thank them very much.

"Things are very scarce and dear. I do not like to ask you for anything. But I should like a watch and chain of some sort from you. Only I know you understand my troubles. My pay is 3/- one week, 4/-

another, and we have to buy lots of things; some things we can't get. I am teetotal, and has been a two weeks. We have concerts every evening, and good ones. I should like a few smokes or whiffs of some sorts.

"This is all at present. Let me know if I am all right.—From your obedient Friend,

THOMAS WILLIAMS.

"(*Postscript*).—Good-bye and good luck to you and all. *Tommy* a soldier.

"Let me hear from you as soon as possible."

He heard from me within three days, but his modest request for a watch and chain was ignored. It happened also that all available smokes or whiffs were required for men on active service. It was possible to assure Tommy that the police were as surprised as glad to hear of his enlistment, and he need entertain no fear of their doing anything to "take advantage of it." I further told him of my admiration of his wisdom in making friends with his mother, the pay he said he was in receipt of suggesting that he had constituted her a dependant, no doubt in anticipation of days on leave, and, ultimately, of the close of the war, that he might be able to claim shelter at her home when need required.

Any fear that I entertained lest he should regard me as unworthy from my meanness of his continued acquaintanceship was dispelled by a visit he considerately paid me six weeks later. The change wrought in him by seven weeks' Army drill was marvellous. Erect and healthy-looking, his face for once wearing an expression of bright content, he spoke enthusiastically of a soldier's life, till it seemed incredible that this could be the Tommy I had known of old.

"We've good grub," he said cheerfully, "and comfortable billets; we've toffs for officers, and

all sorts of amusements. I'm a champion at drill; you see I've had a bit of practice in prison, and I wasn't a mug at it at first like a many on 'em are. It's t' best day's work I ever done, 'listing is. It's made a different man o' me.

"I hope as you don't think me a rotter for leaving mi work as you got me. They were well satisfied wi' mi; they said so; they said as when t' war's over, I can have mi place back and welcome. There were nowt wrong a no-how; on'y I couldn't rest till I wor a soldier."

After all this, and especially as he had told a true story of the satisfaction of his employers with the service he had rendered for nearly, but not quite, a fortnight before his enlistment, it was easy for him to extract a couple of shillings from me to assist in making enjoyable his short period of leave. At its expiration he rejoined his battalion quite cheerfully. A few days later I heard from him that he was leaving with a draft for France.

His career as a combatant came to a speedy and inglorious conclusion. The fault was none of his. It was foggy, according to information supplied by a comrade, and Tommy was spending his first night at the front giving a hand in repairing a section of wire entanglements which had been somewhat knocked about by enemy shell. In some unexplained fashion he seems to have approached dangerously close to an enemy trench, and his comrades realised that he was taken an unwounded prisoner when they heard his vigorous protests against what he had told the Huns was a "nasty, mucky trick."

It is a great pity that prisoners with the Huns are not permitted to express their thoughts in the communications they are suffered to send home. Tommy's would undoubtedly be entertaining. It would be refreshing to know exactly what he

thinks of his German captors, of their method of treating prisoners, the food they serve out, the sort of beds they provide, and much else.

An inkling of his ideas is contained in a message he sent me on a post-card from a prisoners' camp:—

> "I'd give anything for a bit of English bread. A chap here got a tin of biscuits sent him. They did taste good. I hope you'll manage to send me some. I'm barefoot, and a pair of boots would be a regular god-send. Let's have a parcel, Mr Holmes. Remember as I aren't in prison here."

I take it that the Huns must have regarded the last sentence as a compliment to the state of the prisoners' camp, or they never would have allowed the post-card to come through. They were, of course, wrong. He meant me to understand that everything he needed was supplied in an English prison, which was home compared with where he was; and he used the illustration just to show his dire need of the ordinary essentials of life.

Tommy was nothing if not careful in the matter of securing spare strings for his bow. Three other persons—his mother, the clergyman of the parish in which she resided, and the head of the firm where Tommy worked those few days—heard from him by the same post as myself. We clubbed together and sent him a good parcel containing food, clothing, and boots, earnestly hoping for its safe arrival, that he might have some mitigation of the horrors of confinement, hard enough to bear when we had done all we could.

Whatever he has been, he is where he is through an honest endeavour to do something useful and honourable for his country if late in life. It is his misfortune to have fallen again upon evil days. Probably he would have given as good an account of himself as most, had he been granted opportunity.

I am sincerely hoping that his last imprisonment (his first honourable one) will complete and cement the change in his life indicated by the cheerful way in which he answered his country's call, and that when the war is over he will return with constitution by some miracle not undermined, but ready and able to take up further useful work for Britain.

XVII.

SERGEANT ARCHIBALD GILLIES, R.A.M.C.

"I'VE done now what you begged me so often to do. I waited till I'd kept on the straight path for a year, and felt safe. Then I let the old people know. The joy they show in the letters I get nearly every day makes me feel I should only have done harm instead of good if I'd written earlier. It would have killed them to know of all my goings on. All I have thought it needful to tell them is that after a wild life I joined the Army, where I have come back to my better state, and gained strength to live like a man."

The writer of this message, Sergeant Archibald Gillies, R.A.M.C., was once a representative of one of the best-known Scottish commercial houses. I remember well glancing up into the dock and being struck by the intelligence of his face, as a constable recited this evidence against him in formal fashion nine years ago—

"I was on duty last night in High Street, your worship, when the defendant was given into my custody. He was very drunk. I took him to the police station, and charged him with being drunk and disorderly."

Other witnesses had already told a sad tale of damage done to a window, one of them being specially dramatic. He was a burly workman

employed by the highway department of the city corporation, one of a large gang of men at that time engaged in repairing the roadway of the High Street where the alleged offence was committed.

"I wor gettin' mi supper, your worship," he said, "along wi' mi mates, when that there feller rushes out of a public-house like a ravin' lunatic, and makes across t' road to where we'd put us tools down. He ups wi' a sledge-hammer, and first thing he does wi' it is to upset t' watchman's box, upsetting t' old feller wi' it inside, and knocking two three splinters as big as me out on it wi' a bit o' life.

"Then, afore anybody's time to stop him, he darts like a cat across t' road again, and begins to leather into t' shop winder. So I got hold on him, and wrested t' hammer out of his hand; then I handed him to t' bobby. I think he must a been drinkin' till he wor stark starin' mad."

The Magistrate came to the same conclusion. As the damage was committed by a man in that condition he held that it was not wilful, and that justice would be met by imposing a stiff fine and substantial costs, with the alternative of fourteen days' imprisonment.

I cannot say why one sometimes feels instinctively, glancing at the face of a man in the dock, that the task of reclamation will be difficult, yet must be persisted in, and will be successfully discharged at last. I merely state a fact, illustrated in this case as in many more.

Having been out of town attending to other duties I had come late into Court, and knew no more of the defendant than the evidence disclosed. It was not stated that he was a commercial traveller, and his appearance was too shabby to give a strong hint that way, yet I guessed such to be his calling. An intelligent-looking fellow, about

thirty years old, of middle height, well-built, fair-complexioned, his face rather handsome, but weak, he was evidently a stranger to a Police Court, merely saying "Thank you, sir," in response to the Magistrate's decision, and not asking for any arrangement to enable him to pay fine and costs, although an official of the Court stated that he had lost employment, and had no money in his possession.

I interviewed him privately to ascertain if he had friends who would discharge the penalty which his misconduct had earned. He appreciated my motives, and laid bare facts concerning what had brought him to that pass. He had been a fool, he said: running wild, neglecting his duties, offending his firm's customers, and embezzling money, until the inevitable end came in dismissal from employment a fortnight earlier. He had spent the interval in one long drinking-bout, had got rid of everything he possessed except the clothes on his back, and was penniless. But while acknowledging the kindness of my intention, he would not give me the names of any persons whom I might approach on his behalf. He had friends, he admitted, but he had rather they heard nothing of his disgrace.

I gathered that he had parents living in the quiet manse of a Scottish hamlet, but he had not communicated with them since he had started on the downward road. He would go to prison; accept my offer of help on release; get firmly upon his feet once more, and write a letter home when he had good news to tell.

Having served the term of imprisonment, he came out to be at once provided with a situation as warehouse clerk, and a comfortable lodging in the home of a widow, a Scotswoman of fine presence, with the most beautiful grey hair I ever saw, as she was one of the kindest and most motherly

women I ever met. He owed this fortune to the goodness of a Presbyterian minister who also undertook his general shepherding, welcoming him warmly to the Scottish church, and introducing him to other compatriots who displayed keen interest in his welfare. With such a backing, after three months, Archie, as I came to call him, got to the point of promising to write to his parents. But at the last moment he broke down, took to drinking heavily again, gave up churchgoing, and endangered his situation.

He pulled himself together later, greatly assisted by his landlady. After twelve months he persuaded his master to give him a satisfactory testimonial, when, in response to an advertisement, he applied for a position as representative of a firm in the same line of business as his old employers, and he obtained the appointment.

If the persons securing his services desired to turn to their own profit any knowledge possessed by Archie concerning the tastes and requirements of customers of his old employers, and if anxiety to compete in secret fashion with trade rivals was the reason why they made no application to that house for his character, they were suitably rewarded; for he lapsed back into all his old follies within half a year. The new employers had less consideration for him than the old. He was prosecuted for embezzlement, and sentenced to six months' hard labour.

When discharged I procured another situation for him very like the one he was given on the occasion of his former release. The good folk at the church reinstated him in his old lodging, and received him back among them with no further reproof than was bestowed with admirable restraint but firm good sense by the minister. He seemed really on his feet at last, never tasting alcohol for seven months. The letter home was

written; I saw the contents, but not the address; unluckily, before he posted it he had the ill fortune to run against an old acquaintance much given to intemperance, and the unsent letter was actually in his pocket when I visited him in the cell next day. He was awaiting the hearing of a charge of drunkenness preferred against him. The only decent thing to be said of that acquaintance is that he came into the Court an hour later and paid the fine imposed on Archie as expiation for the offence. For the rest, he tempted him further from the right road, made him temporarily unfit to discharge his duties, and gravely endangered his situation. I was heartily relieved when that commercial traveller finished his round in this locality and took his departure back to Scotland.

But Archie had been thoroughly unsettled. He stubbornly refused to send the letter of good promise, saying he had rather die than have his parents know what he really was, or entertain hopes which he would only disappoint. It was quite useless to urge him to add a postscript to the letter, confessing his recent fall and undertaking to try his best to get right again. He promised once more, indeed, to endeavour to abstain from intoxicants, but he was very definite in his determination to postpone writing home till he had better news to send.

He did not leave me long in doubt about what would come of his most recent abstinence pledge, taking so much to drink that within three weeks his master bade him choose between his situation and alcohol. He chose alcohol, and was dismissed. Somehow he managed to secure a post as traveller, "on commission," at once; but the old weakness developed afresh, and he was imprisoned for embezzlement again.

I was inclined to wash my hands of him when he came to me after this. It is provoking—few

who have not experienced it know how provoking —to see a man persistently throw away his chances of amendment. I told him what was in my mind. He did not plead with me to alter my decision. He simply said that he could expect nothing else, and went his way, leaving me most uneasy: I could not tell why; I seemed for the moment to have done the right thing. Yet I could not leave the matter there. I could not get rid of that crushed, despairing, most miserable look on his face when he went. Another effort must be made, otherwise he would assuredly go to irretrievable ruin. I had made up my mind to that within half an hour.

I sought out the excellent minister again; he took me along to that master who had given Archie a chance after his first release from prison. We talked the matter over. The upshot was that he was promised restoration to place and lodging and church once again.

He accepted what was done with a quiet gratitude, characteristic of him, when, after a long search, I found him late at night and brought him into the presence of his benefactors. He told me later that he had made up his mind to take his life, and was actually on his way to a river, fully determined to throw himself in it, when I brought him new hope. The minister dealt wisely with him, showing him whither his course was leading, and not sparing him till reproof had broken him down and caused him to acknowledge the shameful state his wickedness and folly had brought him to as in the sight of God Almighty. Then followed a prayer from the minister's heart which went right to every heart there present—a prayer these words of which burnt deep into my memory, "Lord, help Thy poor servant: strengthen, stablish, settle him,"—and I felt more sure of Archie than I had ever felt before.

I urged him to write to his parents now and wait no longer, saying, as I thoroughly believed, that his resolution would be helped thereby. But he would still "bide a wee bit." He did not want to disappoint. I wonder if I realised then, as I do now, that he had a constant and terrible fight within him? I know only that I respected his decision, and ceased to press him. I felt that he sincerely desired to keep the promises he had made, and I could but hope and pray that strength would be vouchsafed him to endure. But I do not think that I quite understood what he meant when he complained that the devil was "ower strong for him," and that he could not bring himself to say anything to his parents yet concerning a fight of which he felt the outcome to be doubtful to a degree.

In four weeks the fight was lost once more. The same night that he yielded to the temptation to taste intoxicants afresh, he lighted on a woman in a public-house. She was perhaps the most repulsive of all the abandoned females my work has brought me in contact with. Noticing his state of semi-intoxication, she thought him an easy victim for robbery. Making pretence of taking him to her home, she led him into the way of a male confederate.

But Archie was not quite so far gone in intoxication as she imagined. When the confederate was encountered, he heard and understood what was planned. His temper rose as the man addressed him with a lewd remark, and he answered him back sharply. The man threatened him; he dealt the fellow a blow which caused him to reel over, crashing with his skull heavily upon the pavement.

A crowd of low men and women gathered. The wretched female who had inveigled Archie into her net, loudly accused him of attempting to murder

her paramour, who was carried to a hospital, while, on the strength of her accusation, Archie was taken into custody.

The injured man lingered for awhile, then died. It was proved at the trial that Archie struck the fatal blow; he was found guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

I saw him again after three years and nine months,[1] greatly changed. Unlike his former self, he pleaded hard for one more chance. His old minister and both his old masters were away from the city. But it was possible to find him work as a surface labourer at a colliery, and the most considerate and forgiving landlady I ever knew consented to reinstate him in his old lodging. He worked steadily for six months, and never tasted intoxicants. Again I brought him to the point of promising to write home. The excuse that he did not like to tell his parents how their only boy, of whom they had once such bright hopes, had come down to working as a common labourer "on a pit bank," was overborne by the argument that they would not mind a bit for that. The fact that their "son was dead and is alive again" was what would weigh in that Scottish manse. He said he would write on St Andrew's Day.

But the good tidings were not to be sent yet awhile. On the next Saturday, St Andrew's Eve, he lapsed back into drunken habits. From the 29th November 1913, until I missed him in August 1914, there was no occasion when I desired that his state should be known at home. The one bright thing in the whole sombre tragedy was the saintly beauty of the patient and persistent effort which that Scotswoman at whose house he lodged made still to effect his reformation, taking

[1] As is customary—except in rare cases—three months out of every twelve of the sentence are served by a convict "on ticket-of-leave."

no rebuff as final until he disappeared from her door without a word, and even then having hope. We guessed he had enlisted, but we had no news of him until he wrote to each of us simultaneously from France early in October 1915, my own letter containing the message I have quoted.

There was hot fighting in the particular corner of France where he served during that month of October. Letters came from other men telling of decimated battalions. I knew how hard the R.A.M.C. was being worked. Yet, once he had started, he wrote to me every third day. With every note, hastily scrawled on any sort of scrap of paper, I came to realise more gratefully that he set no light value upon the interest I had taken in him, or he would never have found time to write to me with so much else to do. It touched me deeply to feel that I had had some sort of hand in keeping from going to utter ruin one who served Britain splendidly at last, and that he thought of me as he went about his most heroic work.

He wrote the following, when most men would have made weariness an excuse for postponing letter-writing:—

> "Yes, I *was* disappointed when they wouldn't have me in a line regiment. Bad eyesight floored me. But I found my right place here. I courted danger when I enlisted. I thought I was ruled out of it when I only got into the R.A.M.C. I was wrong. I have had many a narrow shave. Nobody ever had such wonderful luck. If I had cared more about my life those first six months out here I should most assuredly have lost it. It is only now that I'm feeling a wee bit nervous, since I wrote home and they wrote back. I've a strange longing to see them again just once more, and because of the longing it doesn't

seem likely I shall, especially as they know all now, no more to be confessed."

Again on the 19th October:—

"It has been constant duty with so many wounded to tend and bring in. I won't tell how they were wounded, or whether friend or foe. There is no sense in painting gruesome pictures of the nature of injuries: you can well understand how dreadful many of them are without telling; and as for nationality, that simply doesn't count. As you say, this duty is as dangerous as any. If I did not feel it to be so I don't see how I could have written home after my past. Going through this fire has made a man of me again, and in trying to do a wee bit of good I have become regenerate, and fit once more for the company of men. And it's you more than anybody else I have to thank for it. But for you I'd have put an end to myself long ago."

It was pleasant to read that he counted me as having had a part in his redemption, but that noble Scotswoman had the greater share; and I am glad that he said something to her in similar vein, also to the minister, and to those others who had helped not a little.

A more faithful, because fuller, account of Archie's doings came from one who knew him at the Scottish church in the days of his folly, and who rejoiced in his transformation.

"You remember Archie Gillies," he wrote; "I mean the man who would tell us nothing about his parents save that his father was a minister, and about whom we wrote to every Scottish manse where the name lived, only to find that no son was missing anywhere. Well, I have turned him up here in the R.A.M.C. He is disgracing no name now, whatever he may have done in the past. He is a hero, the

talk of the whole Army. The way he faces death, not now and then but all along, is just splendid. No man in our magnificent R.A.M.C. has shown a more wonderful devotion to duty. How he escapes is perfectly miraculous. He works as cool as a cucumber, day or night, under most murderous fire dressing the wounded and carrying them in. One's heart is for ever in one's month merely watching him. It's absolutely grand, but it can't last."

It did not last. Seven days later he was dangerously wounded while engaged in his work of mercy. They brought him to England late in November, sending him on to a hospital not far from this city.

When I visited him there he told his story with characteristic modesty. He was proud of the fact that he had won the rank of sergeant, thanks to combined intelligence and hard work, and was obviously gratified by his popularity with comrades in the hospital who had been wounded on that part of the field where he had served. As for them, they told marvellous stories of his contempt for death, and his hundred hair-breadth escapes, atoning thus for his own silence about these matters.

"It's marvellous how he escaped as long as he did," was the unanimous verdict of a little group who described his doings to me with much admiration; "he was so recklessly daring, giving a hand to anybody who needed help, and going half-way to hell if need be to do it, that we came to think he had a charmed life. These Scotties are a grand lot. They're the same everywhere, as brave as lions; and he's one of the very best."

When I called to see him next day, I found that he had been visited by the excellent woman whose influence over him while in her house, in spite of all disappointments, had been so telling.

She was now busying herself in making comfortable, at such times as they were not in their son's company at the hospital, the parents who had come down from the North of Scotland for reunion with him after nearly twelve years. I was speaking with other men, and he was dozing, when the Sister led them to his bed, and they took their places quietly beside it.

Presently I noticed that Archie was waking. I saw a slight flush and a delightful smile overspread his white, worn face. He recognised first the sweet mother, down whose unwrinkled cheeks great sympathetic tears rained, then the grave kindly father, also, as he said later, scarcely changed a bit through all the years of separation.

"You'll be better soon, Archie," the mother whispered tenderly, as she lifted her face from his; and the father added, holding in his own the thin hand outstretched in greeting, "Aye, you're looking bonny, lad—far bonnier than we dared to hope for."

He shook his head; he knew that the flush brought to his face by excitement and surprise was not to be interpreted as their hopes desired. I left them alone, not deeming it necessary for me to intrude that day.

The matron had Archie moved out of the ward into a little room by himself, as is kindly done, sometimes out of consideration for the comfort of a patient's friends, sometimes because it is known that the end is near.

I was promised that I should be sent for if Archie desired it. It was only right that the parents should see their boy alone during those priceless hours. There are no folk like one's own folk to be round the bed when one comes to die. My part in his life was done; I knew it: I was only sorry I had done it so ill.

It was not long before an urgent message came,

requesting me to see him once more. As I entered the room, both parents were watching by his bed, and the noble woman who had, in his voluntary exile, played a mother's part on his behalf, was there too. His mother was singing, very softly, Mrs Cousin's well-known hymn. He had asked for it, it seemed—a last request. He made her understand, by a slight wave of the hand, that he desired her to repeat one of the verses: she did so, and his lips moved in a feeble effort at following the words—

"I've wrestled on towards heaven,
'Gainst storm and wind and tide;
Now, like a weary traveller
That leaneth on his guide,
Amid the shades of evening,
While sinks life's lingering sand,
I'll hail the glory dawning
In Immanuel's land."

Then he was quiet, closing his eyes for a few moments, and folding his hands. Presently the eyes reopened, and he gazed affectionately into his mother's face. She stroked his hands tenderly, and asked how he felt.

"I've no pain," he answered in a whisper.

"Maybe you'll be better soon, Archie," she murmured soothingly. It was just the welling out of a mother's instinct to cheer her boy. She knew that it could not be. He also was under no illusion.

"Don't think that, mother," he whispered with difficulty; "I'm not long here. And it's nothing to grieve about, for I'll be better away."

His head sank exhausted on the pillow, but his face was turned earnestly upward, and his lips moved as in prayer. Seeing this, his father and mother looked into each other's faces, smiling through their tears.

He had neither enquired after nor noticed me

since I entered the room, but I did not mind for that. It was enough to be permitted to be there. The Sister, waiting by the bed like a ministering angel, signalled a meaning glance when all was nearly over. Archie's lips ceased to move, his face became illuminated by a look of bright and beautiful and sudden surprise, he heaved a deep, glad sigh, and was gone.

I left the bereaved parents standing quietly by the bed. It was the kindest thing to do. For their sorrow came as near to joy as such sorrow ever can come. They did not weep as those without hope. They had better cheer in that still bright face than I could offer them. It would have been impertinent to intrude upon a blissful calm so sacred, so heavenly, with any poor word of consolation that I could think of; nay, it was for them to spare a little out of their abundant comfort for me. The very last words I heard as I left the scene were from the lips of that good minister, spoken with the rapture of one who sees the praying of years answered at last—

"'It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.'"

In another volume are set down certain words spoken by my most helpful guide, philosopher, and friend, concerning a son of his who went from the fight in France. I recall here, as well as memory serves, other counsel he gave me when I began the work I have tried to do these eighteen years. It may be that some besides me will find a little hope, encouragement, and consolation therein.

"All go wrong," my kindly mentor said, gravely but hopefully, drawing upon a long experience of erring mortals; "those whom you will try to help right will have gone further wrong than most, that is the only difference. Consider how every

little infant loves its own way, fighting and screaming to get it, and then, do not wonder if you find it hard work trying to pull those straight who have grown up undisciplined, or whose natures are all warped and amiss. We are so apt to be discouraged, the best of us, and to lose hope and patience, when people *will* choose wrong, for all our efforts and warnings. Ah, we forget; they do not see things yet as we see them. It is for us to go steadily on, seeking to instruct them better. If we do but that, we shall see some of those who trouble us most now settle down in time. That has been my experience. It will be yours. Therefore be patient, and having done your best, do not worry overmuch: especially, do not despair over your failures, a thing we are all apt to do.

"It was said long ago by one wiser than you or me, 'That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered,'—he means by mortal man. You will come across men and lads in this most difficult work you are attempting, who are not as others are; some inherited weakness or depravity, some accident or inattention at birth, some early illness, or, what I believe is more likely than many think, the personal power of the devil over their will; or, it may be, evil example copied only too faithfully till habit has grown into character, or, more commonly, lack of careful and wise control,—caused them to be crooked, caused something to be wanting which cannot be numbered; puzzle over it as you will, there is no remedy with you. And if you recall it, that awful dark saying which comes down to us through the mists of ages, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,' will sadden you in many a case; Esau being to human minds unquestionably the most lovable of the two, as many more who seemed fated to go wrong are lovable.

"Then there is that tremendous parable of the clay and the potter, the one vessel of which is made to honour and the other to dishonour; and much else which makes the whole being shudder and tremble as helpless in the hands of fate, except we remember that while 'no man may deliver his brother,' there is no occasion. That was done for all from the foundation of the world.

"The great mistake often made is to imagine one's self wiser and kinder than God Almighty. Depend upon it you can never meet a mortal you are a tithe as concerned about as He; no, not though that mortal be your own son. And he is always face to face with his Divine Redeemer, Who knows every incident of his life, and with Whom is no misunderstanding, no partial knowledge, nothing concealed. They stand for ever; God and the man; the Father and the child; the Saviour and the saved; never entirely out of harmony—what pranks soever he play before high heaven,—never utterly separated. We cannot but believe that the yearning over his own black sheep ever present in a worthy human father's heart is constantly with Him Who understands our nature to the last fibre, to the profoundest depth, and for which He gave Himself.

"Ceasing to vex ourselves over what it is beyond our power to understand or accomplish, having done all we can, it is wise to patiently wait in faith in Him. Then, often, when there seems no longer anything to hope for, hope blossoms at its fairest and strongest. The great Physician stoops with a smile to handle the case which baffled our poor skill, the Almighty Father, without a pause in all the myriad works He has to do, bends to carry home his well-beloved child. We understand at last that all is well; we bow our heads, and are content."

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